

THE WHOLE GOSPEL FOR THE WHOLE PERSON TO THE WHOLE WORLD
A FIVE YEAR MODEL FOR MINISTRY FOR
CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH
LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

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PREFACE

The following essay is written with the intention of explaining the reason why I have undertaken this topic for my project. I want to allow you, the reader, to get inside my thinking and feelings so that you can understand the approach I am taking in this paper.

For the past fifteen years I have served as a parish pastor in the American Lutheran Church. During this time I have struggled with my own tradition and background which has shaped my thinking regarding the nature and mission of the church. I have questioned and sought answers as to why the church exists. It has disturbed me to see the church have such great potential yet so little influence or effect upon society. Watching some of my friends leave the institutional church because of its lack of involvement and relevancy in today's world has caused me to re-examine my own beliefs regarding the church. It has been a healthy though painful struggle which has sent me out beyond the boundaries of my own denomination in search of some answers. This thesis will demonstrate some of the tensions and problems which I have faced in my search for a sound ecclesiology. It will give some idea of the direction I am going at this point in my growth and development as a parish pastor.

The church for me has always been a kind of shelter from the evil world, a place of safety and comfort. I was brought up to believe that the church is a place where one could find answers and solutions rather than a place of

conflict and questions. Therefore, it has been a change for me to discover and experience that perhaps the very nature of the church implies conflict and confrontation both from within and without. Words like happiness, peace, comfort and unity have characterized my past images of the church rather than suffering, tension, revolution and loneliness. Now I am beginning to see the need for both death and resurrection to be a continual experience in the life of the church as it seeks to discover its mission in society. Martin Luther reminds us in his catechism that there needs to be a daily dying, a drowning of the old Adam in us so that we might be raised with Christ and walk in newness of life. This can be applied to the church as well as the individual Christian.

I have discovered that some dying has been needed in my life regarding my understanding of the church. It has been a growth experience for me as I have let go of some sacred cows in my theology of the church. One of these sacred cows has been Lutheranism, a narrow denominational perspective. "Lutheran pulpits for Lutherans only and Lutheran altars for Lutherans only" has been set forth as a guideline for most Lutheran pastors in their decisions regarding fellowship and participation in ecumenical affairs. The word ecumenical has always been suspect in my denominational tradition. Without saying it explicitly, I think I was of the persuasion that Lutherans have the pure Gospel while other denominations were working with a more or less diluted version of what the Gospel really is. A subtle kind of theological arrogance has kept me from experiencing the universality of the church.

A number of exposures to theologians and parish pastors outside the Lutheran tradition, and working experiences in the setting of the local parish have helped to free up my thinking regarding the ecumenical nature of the Church. I have come to realize that the narrow provincialism of the church has greatly limited its mission to the world. Lutheranism has become for me one of the many colors in the rainbow of the church. Its richness and beauty is only apparent when seen alongside of and working in relationship to the other colors, other denominations. The mixture of diversity and unity within the universal church has helped to shape my understanding of its nature and mission in the world today.

Another sacred cow that has been part of the idolatry in my thinking is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Many people are not aware of how this cardinal doctrinal of the reformation has influenced the theology and life of the Lutheran church. A recent scientific survey of Lutheran youth reveals that two-thirds of our young people still live under a kind of works righteousness understanding of salvation. Yet the idea of justification by faith has been so thoroughly heralded as the Gospel that the Christian's responsibility for the world has been neglected. Luther's motto "grace alone: faith alone" has been emphasized at the expense of some other important imperatives of the Gospel such as "seek justice and correct oppression." We have been so afraid of allowing anyone to think they can earn salvation that we have failed to develop what it means to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Two things have helped me to appreciate the doctrine of justification by faith without worshipping it as an idol. One is a new study of Luther's concept of Christian liberty. Luther has been misunderstood by many of us Lutherans. Maybe it might be more correct to say that part of his teachings have been neglected. We have remembered his emphasis on the freedom from the law, but have forgotten his insistence that the Christian is a servant of all. The idea of the Christian as a servant and the church as a servant needs to be revived in the Lutheran church. It is not a new dimension for Lutheran theology, just a neglected one. We need to take a longer look at what Luther refers to as faith active in love.

A second reminder that has helped me to break loose from an unhealthy bondage to the past is that theology is always in the state of growth and development. There is no theology that is fixed or permanent. A reading of the history of the church is a reading of how the church has interpreted the scriptures in a particular time. Times change as does theology. We learn a great deal from a study of great theologians in church history. This does not mean that any one of them has the last word. A parish pastor will be a better pastor if he understands the 16th century theology but we also need 20th century theology. The major issues facing the church in Luther's day may differ from those facing the church today. It has been a freeing experience for me to know that I can appreciate my Lutheran heritage without worshipping it. The work of theology did not end with the Augsburg Confession. The last word about the nature and mission of the church as well as

justification by faith has not been uttered.

My own hermeneutics has undergone a thorough overhaul. In the process there have been a number of lesser sacred cows that have needed to be taken down from the altar. P.T. Forsyth more than anyone else has helped me through this process. He has given me some direction in my search for authority which I have found in the Gospel. In this struggle I have had to remove the Bible from my worship as an idol. This has freed me to accept the benefits of historical and form criticism without losing confidence in the transforming power of the Gospel which I believe is now biblically based not biblically bound. The apostle Paul has become for me a great man of God with keen insight into the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection, not an infallible god to be worshipped. The first century culture of the New Testament times is no longer the model that is to be the pattern for every age. Historical confessions can be appreciated without being binding upon us. A new kind of liberation has been happening in my study of the scriptures and I believe it has drawn me deeper and closer to the essence of the Gospel.

With this as a general background of some of the growth taking place in my life, I will now seek to demonstrate how this has led me to struggle with some major issues facing the parish ministry today. It is these struggles that have motivated me to propose the model for ministry set forth in this project. Questions I am now asking have greater impact on my ministry and give me more excitement than the ones I used to ask.

For example: to what extent does God work in the Church and to what

extent does he work outside the church? Is it true that there is no salvation outside the church? God reveals himself to us in the scriptures. Does he also reveal himself to us in secular forms? Where is God's voice being heard today? Are the means of grace limited to Word and Sacraments? Could it be that these are new and modern sacraments that deserve our attention?

These and other questions have led me to believe that our whole educational system in the church needs to be revolutionized. We need a new consciousness raising as to who we are and where we are going. God is at work in the world. Will we join him or continue in our cozy cloisters too afraid to get out into the battlefield? Jesus will meet us in our needy brother and sister as well as the written Word. The Word continues to become flesh today and we may be as surprised as the shepherds were to discover the unexpected places where he meets us. Maybe the third and fourth world nations are the places where we need to look for evidences of God's liberation message.

Another tension that undergirds my project is the salvation of individuals versus the church as community. From my pietistic religious background and from my American cultural heritage, I have always put more weight on individualism than on community. This has influenced my worship life, my involvement in social issues, my understanding of evangelism and salvation, my ethics of ecology and my relationship to other peoples and nations. As I have sought to acquire a better balance between individual identity and a sense of community in the church I have learned to move in new directions in programming and ministry. Interdependence is becoming a theological

issue for me. The immediate and long range goals in this project will demonstrate a desire for this balance.

Closely related to individual/community balance is the current controversy over personal salvation and social approach to changing society. If a person is converted to Jesus Christ does it mean he/she will become involved in loving one's neighbor? Is the preaching of the Gospel primary and social action secondary in the mission of the church? Is it healthy for the church to have some congregations doing evangelism and others doing social ministry? Why are the conservative churches that put little emphasis on social involvement growing while liberal churches are witnessing a decline in membership? Are there biblical models that can help the church to maintain both emphases with renewed vitality? Is there room in the evangelical tradition for those who want to get socially involved as a church?

It is with these questions in mind that I have chosen to use the burning bush and Exodus passage in the Old Testament as an introduction for my discussion of ministry in the local parish. With a proper understanding of the historical setting of this event I believe it can serve as a helpful model for ministry today. The more I wrestle with some of these questions the more I find that the scriptures do speak to these issues with clarity and force. The Bible is a book of liberation theology.

I have had to wrestle through some serious questions regarding the place of celebration and the place of suffering in the life of the church. Why is there so little celebration in the church today? How can we allow feelings

to be part of our religious expressions without becoming too sentimental or subjective? Can we celebrate life when so many of our fellow human beings are starving to death or living in oppression? Do we understand today what it means to take up the cross, to deny ourselves, to take his yoke upon us, to lay down our lives? Does love result in good feelings always or does love mean suffering? To what extent have we fallen into the trap of wanting to offer quick relief to any conflict, pain or problem in life? Have we lost sight of redemptive suffering? Can we still compare the kingdom to a banquet? How do we combine the banquet and the battle together in our worship life? Maybe we don't celebrate because we don't know what suffering is all about.

These questions have led me to pursue a model for ministry that includes both celebration and suffering as part of our existence. Jesus himself models this paradox in his own life here on earth. The history of Israel in the Old Testament sets forth this model. Church history seems to bear witness that whenever one of these two elements is missing in the life of the church its understanding of mission and ministry is off target or incomplete. The church needs to be freed up to really celebrate together. Worship needs to take on some refreshing revisions. A model for ministry will involve some new ideas for contemporary celebration.

Reflective Awareness

What I have proposed in this model for ministry is based not only on a

broader theological base, but also upon some concrete experiences in the parish. Below are listed a few of the areas of self awareness that have emerged in my reflection upon where I am and where I am going.

1. A congregation will follow the leadership of a pastor if they have established a basic trust in their pastor. Without this trust relationship one may easily find little cooperation and partnership from people no matter how sound the ideas for ministry are. The people of the parish need to trust that their pastor has placed his life under the Lordship of Christ.

2. It is important to be biblically sound in one's preaching and teaching. This does not mean historical legalism or biblical literalism, but it does mean what one says needs to be based on biblical theology. People want to know and need to know what the Bible has to say about God, his purpose in creation, his essential nature as it is revealed in his relationship to Israel, and supremely as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. To bring about any growth and change in people's thinking in the church, a pastor needs to be thoroughly acquainted with the scripture.

3. I have both reverence and agony for the church as it is. I believe that the church is a sleeping giant. It has far greater potential for bringing about change in society than most of us dare to imagine. No other institution in the world is in touch with so many people on a regular basis as the church. It is one of few organizations that reaches all ages and all races. In spite of all its weaknesses and divisions, I find myself thoroughly committed to the church as the place where one can find hope for the future.

4. Two areas have become the focal point of my ministry in the parish. One is adult education. I believe this to be the place where we will have to concentrate if we are going to bring about renewal and/or revolution that will be redemptive for the church and society. We need some radical new thinking and planning in adult education. The other focal point is the sense of community where growth and change can take place in people's lives. Right now in my congregational ministry I have given a great deal of time and attention to small growth groups and task forces where consciousness raising and mutual caring are emphasized. This does not mean that I do not stress preaching, counseling, social action or any of the other aspects of parish life. They are important too. For now, however, I see adult education and small growth groups as being the place where we can best bring about the changes needed in the church today.

5. Terminology and clarity in communication are extremely important as one seeks to lead, educate and enable people in the church. One dare not assume that people understand what you mean. Some means of feedback is important to discover what people hear you saying. Therefore, I have attempted to build into this model at a number of places the opportunity to clarify, to listen, to discuss and to question so that the communication gap will not hinder our ministry. A great deal of misunderstanding is avoided when I take the effort to find out what people are hearing me say.

6. As you read through these pages you will become aware of my repeated use of the words conversion, repent and change. These terms may not

carry the freight that many fundamentalists would give them. They do, however, play a major role in the overall thrust of this project. I am committed to a belief that conversion and change is what the Gospel is all about. The good news is that in Christ I gain the permission and power to change. God is active in the world creating and changing people. We need to believe that conversion is both needed and possible within the Christian community and outside the Christian community. Much of my ministry is centered around the expectation of spiritual conversion which is both sudden and gradual. Our message is simple, yet profound, "Repent and believe the Gospel".

7. One of the approaches I have taken in this project as well as my parish ministry is to see the Gospel as it relates to the whole person. The word *shalom* describes what I believe to be the intent of the Gospel; that is, to bring a kind of wholeness to people that includes body, soul and mind. If the church is going to preach the whole Gospel, it must take an interest in the physical and emotional needs of people as well as the inner life of the spirit. If this is taken seriously, it has some radical implications for those of us who are living in the rich countries of the world. Such implications or applications of the Gospel may well cause both conflict and confrontation for the church. The problem of world hunger has really opened my eyes to see new discoveries in the scriptures and alternate lifestyles which may be far more consistent with my professed values.

I am deeply grateful to Christ Lutheran Church, a congregation that has allowed me to be myself and dare to fail in my adventure of discovering what

the nature and ministry of the church really is. They have been very open to new ideas. Helpful criticisms have opened my eyes to different perspectives. It is the experience and support of their permission that gives me courage to propose the goals set forth in this project. The past eight years have prepared both the pastors and the congregation to now move forward in discovering and actualizing the nature and mission of the church in today's world. The church has no other task but to continue the mission to people that was begun in Jesus Christ who came to reconcile the world to God.

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ABSTRACT

In this project I have set out to develop a strategy and plan for ministry in a particular Lutheran congregation that would span over five years. Major emphasis is put upon developing a sense of community among the members in which personal growth and change can take place. One very important objective is to combine spirituality and global responsibility into the life and ministry of the local church in such a way that it is seen as a whole rather than two parts of the Gospel. This comes out in a practical way through twenty-one immediate goals and twenty-one long range goals listed toward the end of the paper.

This project is intended to be used as a working model for a central core of lay leaders who have demonstrated an interest and ability to give leadership in the church's ministry. The author's plan is to use this paper, divided in various parts for different occasions, for one year in study groups, council meetings, and leadership training sessions. With some helpful feedback and suggestions, we will gradually put into operation the ideas that seem workable and useful. In some situations the goals will be used as guidelines that will serve as a catalyst for ideas and programs as well as changes in the lifestyle of the parish.

The project begins with a biblical model for ministry taken from the Exodus story in the life of Israel. The motifs of spirituality and liberation of the oppressed from this event became a model for the ideas and goals in the

project. A brief history of Christ Lutheran is given so that the reader can better understand the background of the proposed project. Several community agencies were contacted in the effort to give a realistic picture of the kind of community this congregation finds itself called to serve. Some of the information about the make-up of the community was acquired through different surveys among the members. The planning commission of Long Beach was also very helpful. A number of different insights from the social sciences and the human potential movement have been used to explore the nature of the church as a community where growth takes place.

The main body of the project consists of a description of the church and its ministry divided into four categories. They are:

The church is a center of liberation and change.

The church is a learning and training center.

The church is a center of celebration and proclamation.

The church is a center of self-giving service.

Each of these four categories is examined by answering three questions: What do we mean? What is our biblical base? What are the implications for our ministry? The answers to these three questions form a foundation for understanding the nature and mission of the church. They also give direction for some of the difficult questions and issues facing the local congregation today.

Having established what it means that the church is called into existence by the Gospel and commissioned to be an agent of reconciliation in the world,

the project then concludes with some very practical goals which might also be called program ideas. It is assumed that the basic structure and policy of the congregation will remain the same. The goals suggested are measurable goals. Most are specific. Others are broad and have to do with an emphasis or direction for ministry. When these goals are reviewed, revised and owned by the leadership of the congregation, they then would be assigned to persons or groups responsible to carry them out. The success of this model will require a system of accountability and evaluation. It is when vision becomes a guide and inspiration for practical ministry that the church becomes a reconciling agent in God's world.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ the Christian church is commissioned to carry on the ministry of the Gospel here on earth; that is, the ministry of reconciliation. It is described in II Corinthians:

All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

In order to carry out this ministry the church needs to know, to plan, and to act. It needs to know the origin and nature of its existence as well as its purpose, resources, and future. It needs to know something about the world in which it exists and to whom it ministers. The church also needs to plan. This means using our knowledge, our common sense, and the inspiration of God's Spirit to organize ourselves so that we make the best use of our gifts and opportunities. There is good advice in the saying that he who does not plan, plans to fail. Much of the church's potential is never realized because there is little planning done. Of course, plans are of little value if they are not carried out. A system of accountability needs to be built into every set of plans so that we can help each other carry out this ministry of reconciliation. The church needs to act. It was not until the Israelites put their feet into the waters of the Jordan River that the waters parted and the way was open for them to go forward into the Promised Land and into new

experiences of God's love and power. When the church is willing to act in obedience to God, it too will be surprised at the new opportunities for ministry and the evidences of God's redemptive power at work in the universe. Faith that is active in love includes prayer and devotion as well as social involvement.

It is with this in mind that the following paper is presented to leaders of Christ Lutheran Church of Long Beach, California. As we gain knowledge of who we are and where we are going; as we begin to work through and articulate some plans, both immediate and long-range; and as we put into action these plans with the willingness to evaluate and adjust as we go along; I believe we can more effectively be God's agent of reconciliation in our community and in the world.

This paper is meant to be a working guideline for use by the leaders of the congregation who will for one year study, evaluate, change, and finalize it for presentation as a plan for ministry to the entire congregation. It is not meant to be a study of the nature of the church or a biblical survey of the church's task. Rather, it is intended to be an outline that will suggest a possible model for church ministry that takes seriously the call to be God's agent of reconciliation. It will be directed to a specific congregation in a specific community at a specific time in history. This will account for some of the specifics that are included that would not apply necessarily for other churches or at another time in history. This proposal will not deal with all the facets of congregational ministry--only those that may give new direction

for Christ Lutheran Church at this time.

The plan suggested in this paper comes from a pastor who has worked in this congregation for eight years. During this time, I have been in the process of change and growth. A number of things have brought about my growth and a greater appreciation of the church as one of the most promising hopes for the future of our civilization. A big impetus for growth took place during my sabbatical leave in 1966-67 when I studied about and wrote my Master of Theology thesis on P.T. Forsyth. The writings of this great theologian from Scotland set me free from my mystical, literalistic-type approach to the scriptures. My search for an authority was answered when I discovered that the church's authority is the Gospel rather than an infallible book. This insight did not diminish my appreciation of the Bible. In Forsyth, I found someone who combined the best of evangelical thought with the best of humanistic concern for people. His understanding of the church as the apostle and agent of the Gospel and its authority, gave me new confidence in the future of the church. The relationship between the church, society, and the Gospel became clear to me.

I have for a long time felt that the Lutheran church has done a good job in preserving and proclaiming justification by faith--the Word alone, Grace alone, and Faith alone. But in so doing, I think we have failed to train and educate our people for involvement in society. Too many Christians, I have felt, have lost interest in changing the world because they like it as it is. As products of the American society of achievers and consumers, we have be-

come increasingly committed to preserving the status quo and have tied ourselves to those very forces and systems which have vested interest in maintaining social injustice. My recent studies in the causes of world hunger have borne this out. I have wondered if we have sold out to the current socio-economic establishment, often equating God and government as synonymous terms.

It has become a growing conviction that evangelical churches many times give simplistic attention and answers to social and political problems. We attack individual sins with gusto but social and economic evils are often ignored. Our strong emphasis upon individual salvation has blinded us to social implications of the Gospel. We have wrongly assumed that when a person's life is changed through the new birth, problems such as racial discrimination, poverty, war, and pollution of our earth will either wither away or somehow take care of itself. Perhaps Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms, wrongly interpreted, has given us the notion that we can let the government take care of those things while we stick to the Gospel. We need to re-think the meaning of the separation of state and church.

Another dimension of this calloused indifference to social questions that has stunted our witness is the tendency to divorce ourselves from history. Our strong belief in Christ's second coming has become a shield that protects us from any serious responsibility to change the secular order. Human suffering becomes nothing more than a sign of the times. It only means Christ is coming soon. Our eschatology has paralyzed us so that we no longer mean it

when we pray, "Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." Some of us have become so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good-literally.

Something is wrong. I have come to agree with Paul Rees who says: "A socially insensitive orthodoxy is far more of a contradiction of the New Testament than most of us who call ourselves evangelicals are ready to admit."¹ An effort to prove that Christians should have a social concern is like taking a statistical survey to demonstrate that all husbands are married. The Bible clearly indicates that justice in the mundane affairs of this life is very important to God. The failure of much of evangelicalism to leap over the wall of individual piety and to demonstrate a capacity to criticize the secular order has forced many concerned Christians to abandon the normal structures of the church in order to get at the whole Gospel for the whole person to the whole world. To me it seems imperative that evangelical churches return to a biblical synthesis of deep personal faith in Christ and genuine concern for people, both singular and plural. We need to reconcile the pietist and the activist. The church needs both the roots and the fruit.

I have come to believe more and more in the need for and possibility of spiritual conversion among those who come to church. It has been a growing experience that God's Spirit is at work to bring about repentance and faith when the Gospel is preached. Lives are changed. Reconciliation takes

¹Paul S. Rees, "Influencing a Conglomerate," World Vision Magazine, XII:9 (October 1968), 47.

place--not always in the traditional or revivalistic fashion. E. Stanley Jones has helped me to see that conversion is as natural to the laws of the universe as any other natural phenomena. It doesn't need to be dramatic or emotional. Conversion is the act of the will--a decision that involves the total person. It has a beginning of which we may not always be aware; and it continues throughout our lives. If people are going to become motivated and equipped for radical social action in society, if the church is going to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole world, then members of the churches need to experience a death and resurrection of the inner self--a conversion brought about by the Holy Spirit. This is where liberation begins.

As I have pondered the implications of these insights about the church and its potential, and as I have combined this with the Christian implications of the human potential movement of recent years, I have come to the exhilarating conviction that the church has the most viable answer to the world's problems. I, for one, am anxious to be a part of the future church that is called by God to be the agent of reconciliation.

Fresh winds of the Spirit have blown in upon the Christian church in recent years and church renewal is taking place throughout the world. New models for ministry are being tried in various churches--models that have demonstrated how the Gospel is not bound to any one system or tradition. Changes are taking place in our culture that require us to examine our old methods and assumptions with the readiness to make changes when it can enable us more effectively to be God's people who are ministers of reconciliation. It is

an exciting time to be alive and be a part of God's Kingdom on this earth. Information shared in books like Future Shock, The Secular City, and The Greening of America give us reason to take a second look at our cultural and political systems so that we might know better the world we live in. The church needs to become aware that we are not living in a first century culture nor a nineteenth century culture. Things are changing. People's values and life-styles are changing. The mind set of those we live with and work with is different than it was fifty or a hundred years ago. Social revolution is taking place in many parts of the world. From Latin America has emerged a politically-orientated theology of liberation that has swept through much of the church in the third world.

This does not mean that the Gospel has changed or that our task has changed. The church is still called by God to be the agent of reconciliation in the world. But our awareness of the world we live in and the variety of methods available to us can enable the church to do a better job than it has in the past. It is very important for us to examine our priorities, our assumptions, and our attitudes as we plan for the future.

By using a model and working out a plan for the next five years, I believe Christ Lutheran Church can become a better instrument of renewal and reconciliation--helping to heal our estrangement from ourselves, our families, and our fellow church members as well as those outside the church. We can create new self-awareness that will enable us to discover fresh dimensions of our humanity and our mission in this world. There is a great need today to

release the trapped potentialities and trampled creativity that is present in every person. As the church renews its people in this way, it enables them to become renewal agents in a society that desperately needs renewing. A healthy sense of community, together with a vibrant sense of mission, can make our church a place of reconciliation, healing, and growth.

The theme presented for this model is "The whole Gospel for the whole person to the whole world." This gives a perspective of the ministry in which I believe the church is involved. This theme carries corrective implications as well as a broad outline of our task. Part of our problem has been that we have not been faithful to the whole Gospel--choosing rather to emphasize those parts that are easier to understand or act upon. Our socio-economic life-style has lead us to preach a gospel that enables us to continue to support a system that drives a wedge deeper and deeper between the have and the have-nots in the world. A second part of our problem has been to fragmentize man into parts and consider the church's task as having to do primarily with one's soul or spirit. As a result we have many church members who fail to allow the Gospel to penetrate every area of life and we end up with a subtle indifference toward history and toward the physical oppression of God's people. We have avoided certain aspects of the Gospel by too much individualism in our religion. A third problem many of us face is the narrow provincialism and limited vision we have of both the church and its task. The neighbor I am commanded to love includes those who live in other parts of the world. God so loved the world--not just Americans, or Lutherans, or

white people, or Christians. The church will understand and appreciate God's love more as she gains a global consciousness and sees the cosmic significance of the Gospel.

Under this theme then, I will proceed to outline a plan for Christ Lutheran Church that is only a working model. A brief history of the congregation is shared as well as a survey of the community to help us understand the context of this plan for our ministry. One chapter will be devoted to the concept of our church as a community. This is meant to help us know the nature of our existence and the characteristics of the church that will give meaning to the plan. It is imperative that we understand who we are before we can decide on a plan or strategy for our ministry. We must begin with an understanding of the church as a community with a history--a pilgrim community on the go. It is in the context of community that our ministry takes shape. Following this chapter, the mission of our church is outlined into four categories--liberation and change, celebration and proclamation, learning and training, and self-giving service. Under each of these chapter headings, there will be a brief description of what is meant by these categories, a biblical base that undergirds and affirms them, and the implications they have for our congregation at this time.

The inclusion of the biblical passages is not meant to proof-text or defend the ideas from an exegetical point of view--but rather to demonstrate how these functions of the church are affirmed in scripture. The Lutheran Church has always been deeply committed to the guidance of the scriptures for its

teaching and ministry. This approach to the use of the Bible always runs the risk of pulling a passage out of context and thereby misinterpreting it. Since this paper is meant for study and reflection rather than research and argumentation, I believe these references to the Bible will be of help.

A chapter will follow on some possible goals for the future. In thinking through goals, I will first suggest some immediate goals that will be measurable within a year or two and then some five-year goals. My first plan was to include specific goals under each of the chapters related to that ministry of the church. However, many of the goals relate to more than one of the divisions. I have, therefore, put the goals together in a separate chapter. It should be remembered that these goals are meant for discussion and revision, not as fixed or finalized. In order for a plan for ministry to succeed, it must have the input of the many who will carry it out. This paper is meant to get us started in developing a five-year model for ministry at Christ Lutheran Church.

CHAPTER II

A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR OUR MINISTRY

There are a number of pictures, stories, and metaphors in the scriptures that could be used to describe what the church is all about. They all add to our understanding of who we are and what our calling is. For the purpose of simplicity and brevity, I have chosen one passage from the Old Testament that could serve as a kind of biblical model for ministry at Christ Lutheran Church. It is in no way a complete description of the church or its task; but it does give us a model to work with that has built into it a healthy balance of the inner and outer dimension to the Gospel. It keeps before us both the divine and human element in our existence and calling. It gives credence to both the personal and communal nature of salvation. It brings together both the transcendence and imminence of God. It is a model that comes out of a real life situation and, therefore, is easy for us to relate to and apply to our situation today. Within this Old Testament model, we can fill in the Christian implications that are important as a result of our allegiance to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is this event that gives birth to our sacrament of Holy Communion where we celebrate our true identity and source of power.

The passage is found in the third chapter of Exodus. It is the story of Moses and the burning bush that is followed by the exodus of Israel from Egypt. After Moses had killed the Egyptian who was beating one of the Israelite slaves, his deed became known to the Pharaoh of Egypt. It seemed

necessary to him to seek asylum in another country for he could have faced possible death. Moses fled Midian, a country next to Egypt. There he met a priest named Jethro and married one of his daughters, Zipporah. While keeping watch over the flocks of his father-in-law, Moses had this "burning bush" experience. It is described in Exodus with these words:

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" He said, "But I will be with you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain."

Some of the lessons from this biblical event that can serve as a model for our ministry are:

1. God is actively concerned about the plight of his people. God has acted and continues to act redemptively in history.

What is needed for the church today is an awareness of God acting in history to bring about redemption to all people. In history we see God act-

ing both in judgment and grace. While the cross and resurrection are the central focus of God's redemptive activity in history for Christians, we continue to see the unfolding of this redemption acted out both within and without the visible church. Our mission is to keep our minds and hearts open to see what God is doing in our world and try to do it with him. We may be surprised to discover how God is active in non-religious events in history to bring both judgment and grace to us.

2. Moses experienced the holiness of God--the presence of God--which changed him and propelled him into action.

People in the church need to have an experience of the holiness of God--the transcendent one, the spiritual dimension to life--before they are ready to either understand the nature of sin and evil or become involved in any meaningful liberation ministry. A man-centered humanism is inadequate for the church. It quickly runs out of energy or love. The church must always reject a humanism overlaid with a thin veneer of Christianity. Without a personal encounter with God, the church can become narrow and selfish or manipulated by culture or government. The burning bush experience, while it may take on different forms, is an essential part of the initial and ongoing life of the people of God. This means death and resurrection is a motif that weaves its way into every phase of our self-realization and ministry. Self-surrender is a key to self-realization and self-actualization.

3. The burning bush experience of Moses was followed by the call to go and help bring about liberation for his brothers and sisters in Egypt who were

oppressed. An encounter with God's holy love motivates one to enter the fight against evil and the bondage of people. Faith is active in love or it is dead faith.

The church must constantly be made aware that God does not save us in order to take us out of the world into some nice cozy corner to wait for heaven. The moral power of the cross propels us into the world with the command to love, to seek justice, and to be agents of reconciliation. The burning bush experience clears our minds and eyes so that we can better see the afflictions of God's children in the world. We are told to go and help bring people out of bondage and minister to the oppressed. Without the call to go back to Egypt, the burning bush experience would have been incomplete. Without the burning bush experience, Moses would have seen his task as impossible. The church needs a balance of both the personal encounter with God's holiness and grace, and the call into Egypt to tell Pharaoh to "let my people go." Both the personal and social are important to our experience and ministry. One without the other is a radical distortion of the Gospel. It is not a half Gospel; it is no Gospel.

4. God takes the initiative. God is the liberator. God supplies the energy and power. But he chooses to use people to bring out his purposes.

If the church is to understand grace, it must see salvation as an act of God, not man. There are always subtle temptations to center salvation or liberation in man's efforts, or man's worthiness, or man's loneliness, or man's potential. God does not come halfway down to us and then invite us to

meet him in the middle. Grace means God takes the initiative and he comes all the way down to meet us where we are. God does the liberation. God has acted for us. The human race has been reconciled. Redemption is already provided. It is finished. Nothing we do or experience can add to God's grace. We are invited to receive this redemption to claim our forgiveness, and then go about enabling others to receive and experience it. The church needs to be continually reminded of the meaning of grace--God's unmerited love. Yet God has chosen to use a people, his church, to bring this grace into people's lives. Part of the mystery of grace is the plan of God to call into action a community of changed people to proclaim liberty to captives. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us." II Corinthians 4:7.

5. The task for Moses and the Israelites was not easy, or quickly accomplished. Even those Moses was sent to liberate complained and criticized. There was constant temptation to quit. Conflict was a reality, a part of life and growth.

The church needs to learn from the Moses event in Exodus that God does not call us to easy tasks. When Jesus told the disciples to go make disciples of all nations, you can be sure it seemed to be an impossible command. And who can really love his enemies? Not only is our task not easy, but it is often misunderstood and rejected by those who would benefit. Some people's spirits are so broken by their bondage that they would rather stay in Egypt. When the church addresses itself to the evils of bondage in our society, you

can be sure it will meet with resistance both from within and from without.

"We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed." II Corinthians 4:8-9. We are called to be a suffering servant like our Lord.

6. Moses confronted Pharaoh. God's people are called to confront the social and corporate evils of society. The exodus had its political and social overtones. It was a form of protest and revolution. It was not enough to comfort the Israelites with the promise of heaven. God was concerned about their physical plight in this life as well as their spiritual condition.

The social obligations of the Christian is self-evident in the scriptures. A serious study of God's word will not allow us to always view the state and its rulers with uncritical acceptance. When we fail to distinguish between the cross and the flag in our allegiance and devotion, we fall into the trap of creating a civil religion. When this happens, the church loses its prophetic message and our faith can easily become something divorced from history.

It is in the nature of Christianity to become involved in the real world of politics and systems. It is impossible for a Christian to compartmentalize one's faith and seal it off from the rest of life without denying something that is at the very center of that faith--that is, a concern for the welfare of one's neighbor. Present day issues of war and peace, social justice, racism, poverty and hunger, militarism and arms spending, population control, pollution and ecology, welfare, women's rights, prison reform, mental health and health care, and capital punishment have moral and spiritual dimensions that

cannot be ignored by the church. There needs to be a divine discontent with evil in society which will motivate us to confront the pharaohs of our day whatever the risks may be.

7. The task was bigger than what Moses could handle. His excuses were typical and universal. Without the awareness of God's continual presence, he was bound to yield to fear, despair, and hopelessness. He was called upon to trust God who would be with him to bring about the victory. God honors man's faith in him.

We learn from this story that the church is called upon to trust God. Faith in God always carries with it the possibility of doubt, the element of risk, and a willingness to be vulnerable. Trust and obedience go hand in hand. If all our action in the church could be accomplished without prayer and faith in God to act in our behalf, then we do not understand the global dimension of our mission, or the nature of evil, or the power of God. It is impossible to be a liberating agent with any lasting effect without God's intervention. The church in tune with God's will is always taking on impossible tasks. Witnessing divine surprises is part of the experience of trust and obedience. Miracles happen only to those who believe in them.

CHAPTER III

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH - A BRIEF HISTORY

Christ Lutheran Church is a suburban congregation in Long Beach, California, that will be twenty years old in 1976. It is affiliated with the American Lutheran Church and the South Pacific District of that synod. Over the years its growth has been rather typical of those churches that were started in the 1950's. Before 1950 there was only one Lutheran congregation of the American Lutheran Church in Long Beach. Now there are five.

Until after World War II the east end of Long Beach was made up of large bean fields and ranches. Dairies and fruit orchards were plentiful in this area and eastward. The population boom after the war caused the transformation of this farm land into housing tracts and shopping centers. Low cost housing made it possible for young families to move in and own their own homes for less than \$10,000. A large migration of people from the Midwest flooded the area with young families.

As the population multiplied the need for new churches became apparent to the major denominations. Without much cooperative planning among the denominations, many new congregations were started in this area in the 1950's. Christ Lutheran Church was one. Pastor Odden was called by the former Evangelical Lutheran Church to begin a mission congregation in the east end of Long Beach in 1956. Several members from other Lutheran churches who lived in this area made up the nucleus of this new Christian community. For

two years they met in Stanford Junior High School before their sanctuary was built on two acres of land located on Stearns Street just east of Palo Verde. Growth in members was steady, not fast, as the new congregation sought to become self-supporting. In 1961 an additional Sunday School unit was built and re-financing took place. This meant the congregation must pay its own way without financial help from the synod. The San Diego Freeway came through in 1963 and forced the church to sell a corner of its property. In 1967 Pastor Odden resigned to accept a call to northern California. Under his eleven years of leadership the church had experienced steady growth. With a fairly conservative and Lutheran life-style, a firm foundation was laid and the congregation was ready to launch into new phases of ministry. The founding pastor had given the kind of leadership that made possible the transition into these new phases without serious upheaval.

When the present pastor, George Johnson, came on the scene in August of 1967, the congregation was made up of about 550 baptized members, consisting of 150 families. Today its membership includes 950 baptized members, of which 700 are confirmed. There are about 330 family units; many are single parent units.

In the past eight years a number of changes have taken place. The church has become less liturgical and very open to innovation. A strong youth program has attracted the attention of many new people. Our stress on adult education has challenged the minds and imaginations of many of its members. The budget has increased from \$36,000 to \$170,000. Facility expan-

sion has gone through three stages. Another pastor was added in 1971.

George's younger brother, Joe, came from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, to work with major responsibilities in youth work and education. New social action programs, a unified and exciting youth ministry, and small groups have been added or strengthened since this team ministry began. Generally speaking, the congregation is very open to new ideas, an ecumenical spirit, and a world-wide ministry. Its theological stance is evangelical with deep Reformation roots.

There have been a number of challenging conflicts in these past nineteen years which have been part of the church's development and growth. When the congregation was about eight years old it faced a serious financial crisis. One possible solution considered was to merge with University Lutheran, another American Lutheran Church about two miles west. Through the efforts of "Operation Big Lift," the people rallied together and raised over \$6,000 in instant cash from special gifts in order to remain in operation. In 1968 Christ Lutheran Church had to face a serious decision regarding the possible building of a new sanctuary facility. The master plan had called for this. It was decided, however, to remain in the present worship center and concentrate in the future on mission and growth development. The ensuing building fund drive called for the first 20% of all new monies raised to go toward benevolence and the next 80% to go toward the immediate building needs. This decision created a great deal of controversy and discussion as to the real nature and mission of the church. The result of this decision meant that our

major emphasis in the future would not be on growth in numbers but upon equipping the saints for service and mission in society.

Another conflict that facilitated growth was the neopentecostal movement that came into our fellowship in 1969 through a small group of members who witnessed to the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. When our youth were exposed to this phenomena by attending Pentecostal-type youth gatherings in Orange County, it became a problem to the unity and effectiveness of our youth program. Parents became upset and divided. It became necessary for the pastor to take strong leadership at this point to clarify the issues and explain the Lutheran teachings regarding the Holy Spirit. A few families left--very few. Through this, the congregation has learned to accept differences in each other; and many experienced a deeper knowledge of the Bible.

A certain amount of conflict and stress was experienced when a greater emphasis was placed on youth ministry, guitar and drums used in worship, social action projects, a brother-team ministry, ecumenical involvement, and membership commitment and renewal. All of these phases of our growth have served to help the congregation to learn that some pain is involved in every area of growth and learning. We also learned that a certain amount of risk is involved in change and development.

Despite all the hurdles we have conquered and the positive things about this congregation, the fact remains that it has not begun to reach its potential. It remains a sleeping giant. With the development of a five-year plan and a

willingness to put that plan into action, this church could make a much greater impact on the world. There are fantastic resources available. Its greatest years are in the future.

CHAPTER IV

OUR COMMUNITY - A BRIEF SURVEY

Christ Lutheran Church is located in one of the more affluent areas of Long Beach, the east side. We are just five blocks from California State University at Long Beach, a school of 30,000 students. Two major freeways, 605 and 405, intersect about six blocks from us. The San Diego Freeway (405) goes right past our church property. El Dorado Park, a large city recreational area that spans several blocks, is within walking distance.

The following survey was taken at two worship services at Christ Lutheran Church in June of 1975. The results are here included with the questions. Responses came from 226 families.

1. Approximately how far do you live from Christ Lutheran's house of worship at 6500 Stearns?

<u>28</u> within 6 blocks	<u>22</u> between 2 and 5 miles
<u>23</u> between 6 blocks and 1 mile	<u>53</u> between 5 and 10 miles
<u>42</u> between 1 and 2 miles	<u>15</u> more than 10 miles

2. In the block where you live (both sides) approximately how many families attend a church or synagogue regularly?

<u>35</u> 10%	<u>23</u> 50%	<u>48</u> less than 10%
<u>50</u> 25%	<u>6</u> 75%	<u>9</u> we are the only ones

3. What would guess to be the approximate average annual family income in the area (three block radius) where you live?

<u>18</u> less than \$10,000	<u>34</u> \$18,000 - \$22,000
<u>25</u> \$10,000 - \$12,550	<u>29</u> \$22,000 - \$28,000
<u>36</u> \$15,000 - \$18,000	<u>12</u> \$28,000 - \$35,000
	<u>2</u> more than \$35,000

4. How many minority families live on your block (both sides)?

86 none
39 one
21 two

9 three
9 four

23 several
10 don't know

5. Check which age bracket you fit into. (Children were not asked to answer the questionnaire.)

7 12 to 17
31 18 to 25

74 26 to 40
101 41 to 65

10 above 65

6. Are you 170 a member of Christ Lutheran?

36 a regular visitor?

20 here for the first time?

7. Do you live in Long Beach 133 Orange County 64 Neither 28

From this questionnaire it was learned that:

1. Christ Lutheran Church serves a large geographical community that takes in both Los Angeles and Orange Counties. A large number of those who attend Christ Lutheran Church travel beyond two miles enroute to our church. Nearly 25% travel between five and ten miles one way. Just under 25% live within walking or biking distance.

2. The average family income estimated by those who attended church for this Sunday closely relates to the study done by The Long Beach Planning Commission in 1973. They estimate the family household average annual income in Long Beach to be \$14,300. This does not include the one-person household. About 30% of our congregation lives in Orange County where the incomes are higher in general.

3. A great many of our people live in areas where it is nearly all-white population. Over 60% either live in all-white neighborhoods or where only

one minority family lives.

4. Our congregation has relatively few elderly people in its makeup. Yet the Long Beach Study Plan reveals that Long Beach has one of the highest percentages of elderly citizens of any city in America. They estimate that 20% of the population of Long Beach is 60 years and above.

Where are the members of Christ Lutheran employed? Through the Long Beach Chamber of Commerce, the major employers of the city as of April, 1975, were discovered. The top ten are:

<u>Major Employers of Long Beach</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>
McDonnell Douglas Corporation	12,000
Long Beach Naval Shipyard	7,330
Long Beach Unified School District	5,021
City of Long Beach	4,750
Veterans Hospital	3,228
California State University	3,213
Federal Government	2,203
Memorial Hospital of Long Beach	1,761
Pacific Maritime Assn. (Dock Workers)	1,700
Guy Atkinson Company	1,390

Other major employers include: Los Angeles County, St. Mary's Hospital, Robert Shaw Controls Company, General Telephone, Southern California Edison Company, Long Beach Community Hospital, Sully-Miller Contractors, and the State of California.

The ethnic characteristics of the city of Long Beach are revealed in this recent census taken in 1970.

Ethnic Population of Long Beach

	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>Total Population</u>	358,633	100%
White	229,084	91.8%
Black	18,991	5.3%
American Indian	1,172	0.3%
Japanese	3,223	0.9%
Chinese	712	0.2%
Filipino	3,012	0.8%
Other	2,439	0.7%
Spanish Language/Surname	26,073	7.3%

The Long Beach Unified School District has issued the following projection of student enrollment for kindergarten through grade twelve for the coming years:

1970 -- 68,557	1977-78 -- 53,925
1974-75 -- 59,890	1978-79 -- 51,451
1975-76 -- 58,120	1979-80 -- 49,350
1976-77 -- 56,225	

In five years from 1970-75 the total enrollment dropped 10,000. From 1975-1980, they anticipate that it will drop another 10,000 students. The highest enrollment was 74,564 in 1962. The number of children of elementary school age in our community is steadily decreasing and will continue to do so. This has important implications for our Sunday School program.

The current racial district-wide population in the schools is: white, 73.8%; black, 13.0%; Spanish Surname, 9.1%; other Asian Americans, 2.0%; Oriental, 1.7%; and American Indian, 0.4%. Voluntary busing is practiced where those who wish to attend a school outside their area may do so in order to achieve greater racial balance. A couple of racial uprisings occurred in one

of the high schools near Christ Lutheran Church this last year.

In the city's five most depressed areas there is a critical housing problem. Here the average annual income is \$8,130, with 22% of the residents black and 12% representing other minorities. A survey of this area shows that 61% are employed and 36% live on Social Security or welfare. Only 38% own their own homes. A major re-development plan for these areas is now being studied and proposed by the City Council.

Long Beach has two major-size colleges. The State University, located only five blocks from our church, has an enrollment of nearly 30,000 students and 1,100 full-time faculty. Long Beach Community College, located about three miles away from our church, is the largest community college in California. Approximately 30,000 students enroll in this two-year college each year--which has a median age of twenty-six. Adult education and extension classes are offered throughout the city with a large number of persons participating.

CHAPTER V

WE ARE A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

There are four words that I would like to use to help us understand the nature of our congregation as a Christian community. They are family, body, nation, and institution. Each of these four gives a different dimension to our nature and makeup. It will be helpful to keep these images before us as we seek to give birth to a plan for ministry.

A family.--There are 300 references in the Old Testament to the people of God as tribe or family. The family image reminds us that we belong to each other. We are brothers and sisters by virtue of our common humanity as well as our allegiance to Jesus Christ. There is a family bond that unites us and gives us a sense of responsibility to one another as well as love for each other. The function of the family is to provide a place where one belongs; where one is accepted for who he or she is--not because of his correct behavior or achievements. One of the strongest fears today is the fear of rejection. The family is a place where one can be free to be oneself without the fear of rejection. As a Christian community we will want to lay claim to the reality of being a family where we can be present to one another. If we are in truth and deed a family, then many will find refuge in our midst and understand what it means to live in community. At its deepest level the biblical community of faith is a family where one's true being is discovered

and actualized.

A body.--The image of the church as a body is used by Paul in at least three of his epistles. The term "body," more than any other metaphor, expresses the spiritual and functional reality of the church. It gets at the idea of community in a profound way. No one become oneself in solitude. We only discover who we are as we live in relationship to others, as we respond to another's being. Just as no part of the body can live by itself, so no individual member of the church can function in and by oneself. We function only as we are connected to the whole body.

Another aspect to the image of the community as a body is the diversity of members with various gifts all functioning in a different way to build up the body. Each one is important in the community of faith. With a bit of humor Paul describes the beauty of this interdependence in the church as a body.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the

body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 1 Corinthians 12:14-26.

Only when we understand and accept at gut level that we need other people as much as they need us will we begin to relate to others meaningfully, and thus experience the community of faith.

A nation.--In the Old Testament God worked through a nation called Israel. They were a people with a history, a geography, and a destiny. The church in the New Testament has been given the task of carrying on the ministry of God even as the nation Israel was called into being for this purpose in the Old Testament times. We are the new Israel. It is with this understanding that the apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:9-10) calls the Christian church a holy nation. The church is a people with deep historical roots.

What does this say about community? It means our roots go all the way back to Genesis when God called Abraham. We are in covenant with God. We have a destiny. It calls attention to the universal aspect of this community and its mission. We are a scattered nation without geographic boundaries and so we confess our faith in one holy, catholic and apostolic church, the communion of saints. It also calls to our attention the political clout of this community. There are things that we can do in the causes of justice in the world because of our universality and our strength in numbers that we could not do individually. "By you shall all the families of the earth bless themselves." Genesis 12:3. P.T. Forsyth reminds us that the church is the

corporate missionary to the world. Christ came to change society to the Kingdom of God.

Richard J. Mouw in his book, Political Evangelism, describes the nature of community as nation in these words:

Throughout the biblical record, then, God's redemptive dealings are with a people, a community established by his sovereign and electing grace, whose communal life together is, in itself, meant to be an instrument of his redemptive purposes in the world. Israel, by its very existence as a national community, was meant to be a light to the nations, a model of collective obedience to the will of God. Similarly, the church--as the "new Israel"--is meant to be a paradigmatic community, whose life together demonstrates the triumphs of God's grace in human communal existence.¹

An institution.--The church is not only spiritual or communal in nature but also institutional. Our fellowship does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place in concrete situations within society and within history. The institutional character of the church is implicit in the biblical description of its nature and its mission. True, the church is an organism; but every organism God creates is always organized. It seems that no institution can guarantee the possession of God's spirit; and yet, there is a necessity within the very nature of the church which determines if it is to survive, it must be given some bodily form, some structure.

Whenever people live in community some form of structure is necessary. The alternative is chaos and anarchy. No value can survive in history that

¹Richard J. Mouw, Political Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 40.

lacks institutional form. The Gospel needs the church. The church as an institution seeks to find the best kind of structures that will enable it to fulfill its mission. Forms and institutions, structures and habits, make possible the actions of the Spirit. They provide the framework in which the Spirit operates. Our institutional structures will change as times and cultures change. It is folly to expect the church of the twentieth century to legalistically adopt a structure that served the church of the first century. An evangelical view of scripture does not require that we force a first century culture on the church of today. There is no fixed organizational form for the church found in the New Testament. All organizational structures of the church must be subject both to its mission and purpose as well as the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As an institution the church is vulnerable to human failures, weaknesses, and inconsistencies. The familiar saying, "The church is not a museum of saints but rather a hospital for sinners," is not a very complete definition of the church--but it does get at the idea that the church is not perfect, nor are its institutional forms. The plural nature of its existence means we must learn to live with differences and differentness.

The church as an institution is not an end in itself but an instrument of God for the work that he wants done here and now. There are three dangers that the church must always guard against in its struggle to find an institutional form that will preserve the constancy of the Gospel and give visibility and integrity to its witness in society. One danger is the tendency to deify

its structure. Like the human body, the church develops the hardening of the arteries--the hardening of the attitudes. There needs to be a maximum flexibility in developing new structures. A second danger is the tendency for the institution to so identify itself with the prevailing culture that it no longer witnesses to the revolutionary message of the Gospel. We do not need to jump on every popular bandwagon in order to be relevant--whether it be anti-communism, materialism, secularism, humanism, or whatever. Christians bring a unique perspective to social action. Our concerns are never restricted to the few issues of the day that have captured the public imagination. As Paul says in Romans, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." A third danger is the tendency to return to the fixed pattern of the new Testament church in our quest for spiritual renewal. There is a divine character to the church, but not a divinely-given structure. The church is brought into being by response to the Gospel--not by adherence to any special form of organization or written record. Whatever form of structure the church takes, it is, and always will be, an institution. As long as the incarnation and cross of Christ remain at the center of the Gospel, the church has to take visible form and make her presence known within human society as a human society.

Our methods of ministry, our goals and objectives, our mission strategy, and our celebrations will all be geared to remind us that we are a Christian community which means we are a family, a body, a holy nation, and a social institution.

Our Community is Created by the Gospel

What is unique about the Christian community? Are we any different from a social club with humanitarian goals? What brings us into existence as a community? Christian community is a spiritual and not a psychic reality. The church is created by the Gospel. This means first of all that the church is not man's idea. It is not a creation of some wise religious leaders. It is God who called into being a nation, Israel, with a holy destiny and established a covenant with them. It is Jesus who said to Peter, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Matthew 16:18. While it is natural for people of like minds or experiences to gather together, the church is not a community that owes its origin to man; it is a creation of the Gospel. It is an experience that bring us together and forms us into a community--the experience of grace, the experience of the burning bush. Our common allegiance to the Lordship of Christ forms the foundation of our togetherness and our mutual destiny. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it:

Christian community is like the Christian's sanctification. It is a gift of God which we cannot claim...The Christian community has not been given us by God for us to be constantly taking its temperature....Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.²

For our ministry this also means that if we build our community around

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 30.

any other foundation or allegiance we will run into trouble. Ours is a covenant community and apart from that covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ we find ourselves having a difficult time working together and accepting each other honestly and openly. While we do not place ourselves in any superior relationship to those outside the Christian community, we do recognize that it is the experience of God's grace that binds us together in a unique fellowship. We can more easily disagree with one another and still work together when we remember that it is our common allegiance to Jesus Christ that places us in this community.

The community which is created by the Gospel also lives under the authority of the Gospel. The question of authority is a crucial issue facing the church today. People are always searching for a new or different authority. This restless search demonstrates both our need for security and our natural rebelliousness. Some find security in living under the authority of laws or legal systems. Some prefer to live under the authority of self or one's experience. For others some form of science may be their authority. The church lives under the authority, not of experience or laws, but of the Gospel. Even the Bible is subject to this authority. While it is true that we go to the Bible to find out what this Gospel is, it does not follow that the Bible is our ultimate authority. Rather it means that the Gospel which created the church and the Bible is both the source of our being and our authority. P.T. Forsyth reminds us that the charter of the church is not the Bible but the redemption Christ won for us at the cross. Many of the churches' problems in learning

to cope with change are rooted in its tendency to center its authority in the accuracy of a document rather than the Gospel. When we face the task of testing the spirits we need to be guided by the authority of the Gospel--God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ. And we need to be always searching the scriptures to keep us in touch with what that Gospel is.

In order to understand the nature of our community, it is well to remember that the Gospel calls forth a response. When there is a response conversion or change begins to take place, this conversion process continues throughout our lives. The Lutheran Church has always been strong on justification by faith. What this means is that we have entered the race; we are grafted into the body through Christ's redemption on the cross. But it is only a beginning. We must not confuse justification with sanctification. The Christian is always seeking the appropriate way to live out justification by faith. If we are to develop a plan for ministry, we must understand the need for and nature of spiritual conversion as it relates to reconciliation. In conversion we become aware of our reconciliation. The principle of conversion is built into the laws of the universe; and it operates in the human being through the dynamics of the Gospel.

Peoples' conversions are seldom alike; but everyone needs spiritual conversion, both a starting experience and a continual process of conversions. Moses was converted as a result of the burning bush experience. Paul was converted on the road to Damascus. Zaccheus was converted when Jesus came to visit his home. None of these conversions were alike; but they all

were a result of a confrontation with the presence of God, the holy love of God. The Gospel changes people from the inside out. The Gospel brings us into a new relationship with each other. The Gospel creates us into a community. Where there is no spiritual conversion, there is no basis for Christian community. Only those who have discovered new life in their own depths can become spiritual obstetricians, aiding the birth of new life in individuals, in the church, and in society. This is not meant to mean that God is not free to act redemptively outside the church. We are here talking about life within the church.

The church that lives under the authority and inspiration of the Gospel is better equipped to bring about growth through surrender. I have been encouraged to pursue this idea through the teachings of Dr. Howard Clinebell who asserts that one of the keys to personal growth, as well as crisis coping is the concept of surrender. We all need to "hit bottom" as they say in Alcoholics Anonymous in order to become psychologically open to help from others. As Dr. Clinebell put it:

Surrender occurs at a deep, nonvolitional level of the psyche, suddenly or gradually. Somehow, under the impact of the crisis, one's old self-damaging defenses stop functioning. A dramatic shift of intrapsychic forces occurs and is unmistakably evident in the new sense of openness, nearness to people, acceptance of the unchangeable in one's situation, and a realistic willingness to live and let live.³

What may be needed in the church is a more positive attitude toward the

³Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 165-66.

concept of surrender. It should be seen, not as a "giving up" in a crisis, but as a turning away from the futile and reality-denying behavior in our lives. It is letting go of those grandiose self-sufficiency blocks that keep us from more vital experiences of God, nature, and people. This kind of surrender takes place as we live in constant touch with the Gospel and in the community created by the Gospel.

Our Community is a Change-Agent

The church has a particular responsibility to be a catalyst for change in our society. That change is taking place rapidly all around us is self-evident. Without change there can be no growth; and growth belongs to life. It is the direction that change takes that is of concern to the Christian community. We have a strategic role to play in the initiation of change as well as the influence we have over the direction of our fast-moving technological advances. Our generation seems to be able to improve their gadgets faster than they can learn how to handle human relationships. Technology outstrips social policy and capacity to make the moral decisions that such technology demands. Who will make the ethical decisions that are so crucial to our new scientific and technological discoveries? What will guide these decisions? No social agency has as great a responsibility to give moral guidance to our society as does the church. There is no other social institution that is in touch with so many people on a weekly basis as the Christian church.

The church, like other social institutions, has often been better tooled

and trained to conserve than to innovate or change. We are more likely to retreat into the new pietism of our day, that of psychology, which focuses on the individual's problems more than the social context of these problems. Seifert and Clinebell talk about the need for both the prophet and pastoral, both the individual and society as the focus of our ministry.

It is clear that both the focus on helping individuals and the focus on working to change person-damaging social conditions are indispensable aspects of the mission of the church. Robert H. Bonthuis puts it well: "Pastoral care for structures is fully as important as ministry to persons."...The church exists to help people grow toward their God-intended wholeness, their full humanity. This includes helping individuals who are blocked in their growth by inner conflicts and outer injustices.⁴

There are two related false assumptions that need to be corrected if the church is to become a redemptive agent of change in our society. One comes out of the old style of revivalism in America where it was believed that if we convert enough individuals the social problems will take care of themselves. Too many people, in spite of their conversion, continue to engage in acts of exploitation and oppression against their neighbor and refuse to stand against injustice. The other false assumption is that if we help enough persons to greater fulfillment through counseling and education, we will automatically solve the social problems. Both assumptions misperceive the individual. Individuals can exist only as part of larger systems. Conjoint family therapy has taught us that the most effective way to help individuals change is to

⁴Harvey Seifert and Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Personal Growth and Social Change, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 13.

change the family system. This insight needs to be and can be extended to the wider system of societies of which families are a part. We need to change systems as well as individuals.

One reason for the church's interest in the social conditions of society is that individual problems collectively feed and undergird social problems. People who have been exploited are less-useful citizens. Children who have an early experience of rejection and self-debasement will most likely become major contributors to delinquency, family disruption, and racial violence. Poor mental health also fosters social problems.

The church as a change-agent in society must understand the constructive use of power. When Moses inflicted the plagues on Egypt, he was using power constructively to bring about social change. When Jesus upset the money changers' tables in the temple, he was using another kind of power to bring about change. If we are to participate responsibly in a redemptive way, the traditional educational approach must be supplemented with political power. Many important situations do not change without pressure. To exercise power creatively means the church needs to take a hard look at the realities of power in the modern world.

When a Christian writes to an elected government leader about a social problem, he is exercising power to bring about change. When we vote, we are exercising power to change. The church as a unit, as well as individuals, should never choose to remain powerless when it is in their capacity to use power constructively. We must remember that the power structures of society

are more open to personal influence than we ordinarily realize. By the encouragement of the church, top-level church leaders may have the courage to become a part of the intervening elite in the direction of government decisions that affect the lives of many people. Our silence can be seen as a powerful influence for which we are responsible.

There are many different ways that the church can increase its effectiveness as a change-agent. As the body of believers takes seriously the priesthood of all Christians, the lay person will see his/her ministry on the job and in the community as important as the time spent in church work. A vice-president of a major corporation can do a great deal more about opening jobs for minorities or stopping air pollution than can the local ministerial association. The church can influence and support lay persons who are already part of the system that needs changing. Their vocational witness needs to be recognized as service to God.

The use of small groups in the local church can have great benefits that lead to bringing about change both in individuals and in society. In small growth groups persons learn to become open and honest about their feelings. They learn to handle conflict and differentness. One's own uniqueness and worth is usually affirmed as well as one's gifts and abilities. Once a person has been freed up to be the unique self God created, there is a greater capacity, interest, and courage to face the needs of others more realistically.

One of the contributions of Virginia Satir in her book, Conjoint Family Therapy, is that often the identified patient in a family crisis becomes a

scapegoat for a problem that is caused by the whole family. Small group experiences such as family clusters, as well as family counseling, can help us to uncover how we all are often part of the problem and part of the solution to the evils that plague our society and our homes. Most of us are better able to handle this confrontation and insight when it comes to us through a group experience rather than face-to-face encounters. Changes in behavioral patterns seem to be achieved more easily in groups than in individual counseling.

Without going into a study of group dynamics and the use of groups in the church, let it be said for our purposes that there is great potential for change in the utilization of small groups, both person-orientated and task-orientated. Through small groups the journey inward and the journey outward can combine to release the power of God's love in the lives of people in such a way that changes do take place and we can become fully-functioning persons.

Our Community is the Context for Growth

Institutions like the church become viable to the degree that they provide opportunities for human growth. A high priority for renewal in a community such as the church must be the understanding of the church as a human development center. There is an urgency about the need to provide a network of varied growth opportunities in the church. The pressures of loneliness, diminished self-esteem, and the hunger for love all remind us of this urgent need.

The New Testament pictures the gathered community of believers as a koinonia where growth takes place. This Greek word is frequently used in the

scriptures to describe the unique kind of unity and fellowship among Christians where we are encouraged and enabled to become what God intended us to be. Koinonia describes a deeply interdependent life together in which people share deeply, bear one another's burdens, and in which there is a real sense of oneness. This Christian brotherhood is not an ideal but a divine reality based upon the common experience of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Koinonia cannot be created by us. It is to be discovered, appreciated and appropriated.

Everyone has within him an impulse to develop his/her potentialities. This drive is our fundamental resource in education, counseling, and personal growth. Reul Howe, in his book, Survival Plus, reminds us that survival demands growth. What he means is that in order for us to survive in any meaningful way in a world that is experiencing such rapid changes, it is necessary for each of us to grow. Growth means finding the right way to use all our resources to deepen and expand our interpersonal relationships. Growth is a creative force built into the very nature of our being. The church as a community of caring people is one of the best places where growth can take place.

To realize this potential we must overcome our preoccupation with individual religion.

Biblical religion is personal but not private. Modern individualistic pietism is simply not biblical. We err when we equate personal with individualistic religion. The very concept of person implies membership in a community. Paul Tillich reminds us that no personal being exists without com-

munal being. He states, "There is no person without encounter with other persons. Persons can grow only in communion of personal encounter."⁵ The unique power of the Holy Spirit is experienced in the common life of the believer with other believers.

The will to relate is a powerful inner human stirring. To continue growing every person requires a depth relationship with at least one other person. The behavioral sciences remind us that the individual becomes a person in and through interpersonal relationships. From infancy on, our growth depends upon the strength, warmth, and richness of our interactions with other significant persons. In our adult years our identification with one or more groups becomes the foundation of our behavior. Nathan Ackermann puts it this way:

It cannot be forgotten that at any point in time the individual is the repository of a group experience. His identity is at once both individual and social. He is a mirror image, a microcosm of his family group. At a given moment in life he epitomizes a whole hierarchy of family configurations, each of which corresponds to his individual personality at a particular stage of growth.⁶

We are social beings in a very fundamental way. From Synanon, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other self-help groups, we learn again and again how we are people who need people. The Being-needs that Abraham Maslow talks

⁵Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 176.

⁶Nathan W. Ackerman, The Psychodynamics of Family Life (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), p. 7.

about include the need for community, for interdependence, for family, and for fellowship. There are, of course, times when the healthy person needs to transcend the group. Yet it must be realized that the strength to do this has been developed in a person by the community. Motivation for growth and self-actualization can only happen in the context of community.

It has been my experience that some of the greatest evidences of church renewal are present where interpersonal groups are in operation. It is in this context of community that people discover what the church is all about. They discover what it means to be loved and accepted for who they are. A healthy self-image and self-love can only be discovered as one relates to others in a community of love. Change and growth take place more rapidly and more redemptively as it takes place in the context of Christian community where we can be honest and open with each other.

Again from the behavioral sciences we learn the tremendous importance of self-disclosure in our mental and emotional growth. When we succeed in hiding our being from others, we tend to lose touch with our real selves and this loss contributes to our loneliness, self-hatred; and various forms of illnesses. Sidney Jourard points out that our fullest personal development can take place only as we gain the courage to be ourselves and disclose ourselves with others. We only know that much of ourselves which we have had the courage to confide in someone else. Jourard says:

I suspect a man's life begins to lose meaning most rapidly when he becomes estranged from his fellows, when he distrusts others so much that he misleads them into thinking they know him, when in fact, he knows they do

not and cannot.⁷

It is this self-disclosure that Christian community makes possible. It is this courage to be known that is encouraged among those who choose to enter into the Christian koinonia. Self-awareness is a path to greater aliveness. A person is alive to the extent that he is aware of and in relationship to the many facets of himself, others, and God. By self-awareness, which is a work of the Holy Spirit, one moves beyond knowing to being oneself.

Each person is a unique creation of God. In the context of community a respect and concern for the individual person is experienced. In our society there is a tendency to depersonalize and dehumanize people. This is partly due to the reductionist view where a person is reduced to a few elementary components. A person tends to become only an economic being, a sexual being, or a number in a technologically-orientated society. Technology has demoted many from meaningful work; and the result is the loss of something essential to humanity--that is, self-respect. Automation has disenfranchised people from meaningful work. People tend to be valued in our society for their success or their achievements rather than being valued as a person. One's uniqueness and wholeness is neglected. All of this calls for the need of a sense of community for our survival as persons.

Without the experience of living in community where one is known and

⁷Sidney Jourard, The Transparent Self (New York: Van Nostrand, 1968), p. ix.

appreciated, the Christian can go on for years being religious but not growing and changing or realizing their God-given potential. Without the experience of community one may never learn to be intimate with others. By this I do not mean sexually intimate but close to a person on the feeling level. Without the experience of community we may never satisfy the Being-needs that would enable us to accomplish the changes in society that we are called to bring about. In the context of community it is possible to really care about people. Without community our coming together for worship and celebration loses its power to unite us into a fellowship; and the discipline of regular worship declines. The motivation is not present.

As we take seriously the growth potential through meaningful interpersonal relationships, it must be remembered that growth has not only rewards and pleasures. There are also many intrinsic pains. Each step forward is a step into the unknown, the unfamiliar that may involve danger. Growing means giving up something familiar and perhaps satisfying. It frequently means a parting or a kind of separation. It also means giving up something that may be an easier or simpler and less effortless way of life in exchange for a more demanding life. Yet growth belongs to life and the Christian community provides its members with the context where one is more willing to face the risks and pains that go along with growth. As Abraham Maslow says:

"Growth forward is in spite of these losses and therefore requires courage, will, choice, and strength in the individual, as well as protection, permission, and

encouragement from the environment."⁸ For the Christian this environment is the community of caring people called the church.

As we look at the ministry of our congregation for these next five years, I think it would be well for us to make the small group meetings and different experiences of community as the central context for growth and change. Our church should be bold and imaginative in experimenting with a variety of self-help groups. Each person who is open to growth and development needs a support group. When different people seek to join our congregation, they should be made aware that this is our strong belief and the model for carrying out our ministry.

Our Christian Community is Openly Vulnerable

To live in community involves a willingness to be vulnerable. It involves risk, honesty, conflict, flexibility, and personal openness toward one another. To be vulnerable means to be open to criticism--honest and real. So often people in the church fear the intimacy God has meant for us in our relationship because we are afraid to let people get to know who we really are. This is explained well in John Powell's book, Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am?. The fear of rejection previously mentioned is powerful in all humans.

To live in community means accepting the risk of being human. Risking

⁸Abraham Maslow, Toward A Psychology of Being (New York: Van Nostrand, 1968), p. 204.

is living life and building relationships without knowing how it will turn out. It means giving ourselves to others without knowing how it will be received. Risk-taking is so integral to the Christian life that one cannot be committed to Jesus Christ and the Christian community without a willingness to risk. Growth requires risk. Man is made for this kind of high adventure. There is risk-taking instinct in all of us. There is risk involved in faith. The author of Hebrews brings this out in his description of faith. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:2. The church in its desire to be a community under the Lordship of Christ, must accept the risk involved in faith as well as in open, honest relationships.

Honesty requires vulnerability; and honesty is essential to growth both individually and corporately. Honesty is a key to fellowship. It encourages confession and the courage to share our struggles and doubts. Without this honesty the church ends up playing games and the quality of our relationships becomes shallow and perfunctory. The church must always be careful in displaying its trophies, its victories, and its successes. This often says to the losers in society that they don't belong. We need to be as honest about our unanswered prayers as we are about the ones that are answered. We need to share our defeats as well as our victories, our doubts as well as our joys. As we take off our masks we make ourselves vulnerable; and this draws us together on a deeper level and enables us to be human and real.

In many of our churches' activities and programs we have washed the risk out of our involvement. Instead we are prone to build in certain guarantees

to protect us against rejection or ridicule. Karl Olsson in his refreshing book, Come To The Party, reminds us that the recognition of our humanity, including our wide range of frailties, is to present ourselves vulnerably to the Christian community and to the world. He talks about the risks involved in this giving of ourselves.

In the measure that the team (community) becomes meaningful to me as the new family of blessing I am able to be more and more inclusive in my loves. Because the team lets me be human, I can be human toward more and more people. Thus, in a real sense, the church becomes catholic (universal).

The team continues to exist only in a dimension of such radical honesty that it is invariably tempted to compromise itself and become something less than a team. Because death is so painful, the team may ritualize it. Because piety is an easier stance than humanity, the team may go pious.⁹

If piety is easier than humanity, then we face a real struggle to maintain honesty in the Christian community. We need to eliminate the word safe and replace it with risk as a description of our life-style, our relationships, and our planning. This means as we set goals for our congregation we will not be afraid to step out in faith to accept the challenge before us. This means a willingness to face conflict and learn how to use conflict as a process in growth. The fear of failing will not keep us from moving into uncharted waters. A good question to ask ourselves about every project and program might be, Is there any risk involved? What are the risks? If there are no risks it may be that we are not doing our task.

⁹Karl Olsson, Come To The Party (Waco, Tx: Word, 1972), p. 163

We can learn about the creative use of risk from the history of Israel as well as the life of Jesus. Abraham's willingness to leave Ur of the Chaldeans was an exercise in creative risk. The exodus from Egypt was a strategy for liberation that carried all kinds of risk with it. There were a number of securities in Egypt they would never have out in the desert. When Jesus chose his twelve disciples he did not pick the promising, well-trained religious leaders of Israel. What a gamble to put a zealot and tax collector together in a group. As Clarence Jordan says, Jesus most likely had to sleep between those two men many a night. Jesus was not afraid to say things that cut right to the center of the issue. To the promising young ruler he said, "One thing you lack. Go. Sell all your possessions and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Matthew 19:21.

Jesus was willing to risk losing this person as a follower when he confronted him with his basic problem. It is staggering to think of the risk involved in the creation of a fellowship called the church and to leave them with the task of extending the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth--and without any written instructions. As disciples of Jesus Christ we are indebted to our Lord for showing us how essential risk-taking is in our mission to the world as well as our own growth. The Christian community is truly vulnerable in a creative, daring sort of way.

Our Community Accepts Discipline

Only the disciplined change the world. The Christian community can also

be described as the society of the disciplined. In the second chapter of Acts we read how the early Christians maintained a healthy Christian community. It says, "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers." Acts 2:42. This devotion is necessary to community. It is important that this discipline come basically from within. That is, it must spring from the inner spirit that has become committed to Jesus Christ, from a spirit that first of all has been set free from sin, legalism and works righteousness. From church history we should know the dangers of living under discipline that is forced upon one from the outside. A Christian living in community is always given the option to accept the disciplines that they may agree upon. Christian discipline is born out of love; not guilt, coercion, or a low sense of self-worth.

It should also be remembered that our sinful nature rebels against most discipline. Therefore, discipline needs to be renewed, examined, and empowered regularly by the Gospel. A community living under certain disciplines needs to encourage one another along the way. The author to Hebrews calls this to our attention. "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another." Hebrews 10:24-25. Each Christian who accepts discipline needs support from other Christians--not criticism but support.

This will mean for our congregation less emphasis on numbers and more emphasis upon quality of commitment and quality of life. Robert Hudnut, who stirred up many of us in the church with his books, The Sleeping Giant, and,

Arousing The Sleeping Giant, has authored a third book called, Church Growth Is Not The Point. In this book he points out that the real issue is whether the church is being true to the Gospel. The point is to be made real, to be reduced, to preach, to pray, to be forgiven, to be inspired, to be humbled, to suffer, and to be a disciple. Hudnut goes on to suggest that God always works through the faithful remnant. When church membership drops off because we refuse to huckster Christ and because we are dead serious about the claims that the suffering servant makes upon us, it may be the best thing that can happen. The church needs to become lean and stripped for action in the 1970's.¹⁰

One aspect of the discipline in the Christian community that needs to be built into all of our programs and commitments is accountability. Without this we tend to become weak and ineffective. Much of our potential is locked up. Caring accountability is holding each other to our agenda. It says to a fellow Christian, I want to help you be what you know you want to be. Christian freedom is not lost when we hold ourselves accountable to someone. Rather it acknowledges our interdependence upon one another. We need each other. This discipline needs to be built into discipleship.

There are three disciplines that should become part of those who choose to belong to our Christian community. The disciplines are: To study, to

¹⁰Robert Hudnut, Church Growth Is Not The Point (New York: Harper & Row, 1975)

share, and to serve. Each of these can be spelled out as people inquire about the joining of our community. Each should have its own system of accountability. Each should have various levels of discipline recognizing that not everyone is at the same place in growth and commitment. The relationship between the Gospel and discipline needs to be included in the preaching and teaching ministry. Options under these three disciplines will need to be changed from time to time as we remain open to God's guidance and the needs of the world.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHURCH IS A CENTER OF LIBERATION AND CHANGE

What do we Mean?

When we take up the study of our task and calling as a church, we find that it can be described in a number of ways. Traditionally it has been referred to as the church's mission. Some claim it is more correct to state that the church is mission, not the church has a mission. For our purpose we will use some other terms and concepts that will get at the same thing--that is, the task of the Christian community called the church.

When we use the terms liberation and change we are talking about the effects of the Gospel upon persons, systems, and institutions. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he liberated them from bondage. Jesus liberated people from sin, disease, ignorance, and fears. The Gospel frees us. It liberates. The task of the church is to bring about liberation. This means enabling people to live to their God-given potential. Liberation means change--change in attitudes, life-style, values, and systems. Again this is the work of the Gospel. The Gospel brings about changes and the church is the agent of the Gospel. There are changes brought about by laws, social mores, guilt, and many other forms of pressure. Our ministry of change is that which comes about because of the power of the Gospel. Unless we know God as a source of liberation we fall into the clutches of one autonomy or

another .

What is our Biblical Affirmation?

Rather than refer to many sections of scripture that call our attention to these various functions of the Christian community, I will concentrate on only a few in this paper. An attempt will be made to include the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has annointed me to being good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn. Isaiah 61:1-2, also Luke 4:16-21.

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8.

Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. John 8:31-32.

And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the paralytic--"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!" Mark 2:3-12.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1.

Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. II Corinthians 5:1.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. John 12:24-25.

What are the Implications for our Ministry?

1. It means we must take sin and the power of evil seriously. Sin can be seen as that which blocks growth, human potential, and self-actualization. Sin is both an individual and social or collective reality. Its grip on persons and the systems of society is far more deeply entrenched than often realized. We need to learn from Jesus to take seriously the satanic powers that can so quickly destroy our full humanity and take away our hope. The Genesis account of the fall seems to say that sin begins in the personal; but its expression is also corporate, social, and even cosmic.

2. It means that the new liberation theology may give us a fresh framework to guide our ministry. This way of seeing Christianity at work focuses on human liberation from the perspective of the oppressor-oppressed relationship. It sees both the oppressor and the oppressed as needing liberation. "Liberation begins in grace and moves from this foundation in grace to the possibility of self-judgment and repentance."¹

¹Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), p. 9.

3. It means that our Christian community can become a center for human development and growth to the glory of God. Christians need to see themselves and their churches as agents of change and agents of liberation. As a center for human development, we serve not only our congregation but the whole community and the world.

4. It means our goals will be more people-centered than program-centered. We will concentrate on relationships, human potential, and doing theology relationally. It means we will see all people as created in the image of God who need to be set free to realize their capacity to change. It means we will look for that in persons that holds them together and unifies them. We will get in touch with the power of the person.

5. It means that we must understand that growth and change are sometimes painful. It requires death and resurrection. The dying to self-centeredness is never easy. Without conflict there is seldom any major personal change or social progress. The death-resurrection experience is a continual need in the ministry of liberation. The Christian community also needs to experience death and resurrection as a corporate body.

6. It means the church must see its prophetic role in society. The Old Testament prophets remind us of the need to bring before the attention of people and nations the needs of the oppressed and the causes of oppression. Ours is a ministry of confrontation in order that liberation may take place. This means politics and religion do mix. Biblical theology is political theology.

7. A global consciousness needs to be developed among all Christians. This means that we must take a new look at our world-wide mission support and work. Old patterns, attitudes, and methods of missionary work must be replaced with more realistic and biblically sound programs that do not dehumanize people or make them extensions of American culture. It is important that we see the object of mission as both the redemption of individuals and the transformation of society--to liberate people from their total situation. It means becoming actively alert and involved in the development of humanity in other countries, especially the third and fourth worlds. It means working alongside of the powerless, the poor, the forgotten, the untouchables in our community and throughout the world. It means making some hard choices about our life-style. It means cooperating with and supporting those who are seeking to bring about that kind of liberation and change that makes for wholeness, justice, and freedom.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH IS A LEARNING AND TRAINING CENTER

What do we Mean?

Dedication and sacrifice need to be part of the challenge to follow Christ. Some have said that the greatest need in the church today is leadership. Leadership is not something that falls out of heaven. It does not just happen. It is built into a program through training and experience. To be a follower of Jesus means to be a learner. A disciple is one who learns. Jesus' method of ministry had a long-range training plan built into it. While he preached to and taught the multitudes, he concentrated on training only a few who in turn would teach others. He harnessed the idealism and energy of youth. He spent several months with the twelve giving them a variety of experience and training. It was contextual education and training. One of the mistakes the church has often made is to ask people to do a task without any training. The immediacy of our needs is one of the factors that has forced us into this trap. The popular image of the pastor as the one most responsible for ministry is another factor. Equipping the saints for ministry needs to be long-range as well as immediate. The task of making leaders is really one of creating an attitude of mind. The church must give serious attention to the training of lay persons in their task of being servants, priests, prophets, teachers, and agents of change. *Ours is a mutual ministry.*

God has given each of us a variety of gifts or abilities to function with or use in building up the body of Christ. Every Christian has a spiritual gift --a unique contribution to make to the community of faith. It is Bonhoeffer who reminds us of the danger when members of the community are allowed to remain in the community without exercising their gift for building up the body.

He says:

A community which allows unemployed members to exist within it will perish because of them. It will be well, therefore, if every member receives a definite task to perform for the community, that he may know in hours of doubt that he, too, is not useless and unusable.¹

A great amount of our potential and creativity is often never uncovered or used. One reason may be that the church has failed to provide the atmosphere and opportunity for lay leadership and training. Our top-heavy structure has deprived us of an enormous resource, our gifted members. By our greater involvement in more intimate interpersonal relationships, we help each other to discover our gifts. Ours is a gift-finding ministry. The pastor's role becomes more that of an enabler; one who enables the Christian community to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

An important part of the church's training in discipleship is to help people develop a system of self-evaluation and the discipline of accountability. A gospel-orientated attitude toward discipline means working out a harmony between individual needs and goals with responsibility to the community.

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 94.

Discipline needs to be seen as part of our education growth opportunities, and not to be equated with conformity or legalism. Lyle Schaller affirms the need and value of the discipline of self-evaluation when he says:

Unless a local church builds self-evaluation process into the life of that parish, it will be extremely vulnerable to normal institutional pressures to place a higher priority on survival than on service, and to put institutional maintenance ahead of ministry in the allocation of resources.²

Self-evaluation forces us to periodically reflect on our purpose in life, our goals, and objectives. When this is done we are more likely to focus our attention and energy on those things that have priority for us. Part of the church's training is training in self-criticism and self-evaluation.

What is our Biblical Affirmation?

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Joshua 1:8.

He who ignores instruction despises himself but he who heeds admonition gains understanding. Proverbs 15:32.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6.

The Beatitudes

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom... Matthew 5:2-12.

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man and God

²Lyle E. Schaller, Parish Planning (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 97.

may be complete, equipped for every good work. II Timothy 3:16.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' training and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
II Timothy 2:15.

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. Ephesians 4:11-15.

What are the Implications for our Ministry?

1. It means that a major portion of our budget should be seen as money spent to teach and train all members, not just children. Our educational program will encompass the life span of everyone from the cradle to the grave.

2. It means taking more seriously the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. If every Christian is a priest then our ministry will become less clergy-orientated. Everyone who follows Christ has a ministry, not just the pastors. That ministry is directly related to one's vocational choice as well as civic and political responsibility.

3. It means giving a high priority to the reading and study of the scriptures. One cannot be a growing and effective Christian who remains ignorant of the Bible. While Bible study alone is of small value, without Bible know-

ledge, we lose contact with our compass and we can easily get lost or lose interest. Greater disciplines need to be built into our study programs. Our tendency has been to promise too much and challenge too little.

4. It means also that we take advantage of the resources available to us to become knowledgeable and trained through the offerings of other institutions in society. The daily news, educational opportunities, political involvement, counseling and therapy, as well as one's own failures and suffering can become training ground for our ministry. The best education is contextual education--which means learning in the field where we live, work, play, and encounter the issues of life and death.

5. It means we will see the importance of training for the future, not just the immediate. We must not fall prey to the tyranny of the urgent. The church needs to learn patience and perseverance in training its people. This includes the continuing education of both laity and clergy. Career development is part of our stewardship responsibilities. Goal setting and values clarification can help us toward greater effectiveness and self-fulfillment.

6. It means that part of our job is to help people discover their gifts, their abilities, and the place they can make the best contribution both to the body of Christ and the world. All people need to be encouraged to use their gifts.

7. It means that the family is the best place for training in Christian discipleship to begin. It is first in the family that children develop a healthy self-esteem and interpersonal relationships that lead to success or failure as

human beings. The Christian family is a mini-seminary, training persons for ministry. It means we need to do all we can to support and strengthen the family unit. It means becoming fully aware of those forces that seek to destroy and weaken marriages and families. It means giving greater attention to the family as a whole in our worship life, our education, and our counseling and caring ministry.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH IS A CENTER OF CELEBRATION AND PROCLAMATION

What do we Mean?

To live life as God meant it to be is to celebrate life. This means to enjoy life. Celebration is a style of life. It roots itself in lived moments. As Ross Snyder says, "we celebrate a reality which we find at work in our world at particular points in very concrete encounters."¹ The history of God's people as outlined in the scriptures is the history of events and the celebration of those events. The Christian community celebrates to keep alive an event, an idea for future use. In our celebration we become aware of who we are. We learn our true identity through our celebrations. Through the celebration of the Passover, the Israelites kept alive their calling and their destiny, their identity as God's chosen people.

Life is so full of suffering, problems, questions, tragedies and defeats that we need to keep alive the art of celebration in order not to despair. With our world so precarious and ambiguous we live in the constant threat of meaninglessness, death, and destruction. We need times of worship that will bring us into a greater awareness of God's presence and power. The Christian community needs to have built into its life-style the element of celebration which

¹Ross Snyder, Contemporary Celebration (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 31.

enables us to live with a positive attitude even as we seek to lay down our lives for our neighbors. It is John Calvin who said, "the chief purpose of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

An important part of our celebration is the proclamation of the Gospel. Celebration is proclamation. Worship is the celebration of the good news. The worship of the Christian community is like a party where Christ is host and to which everyone is invited. In our worship life we continue to give proclamation a high priority through the act of preaching. Without a strong pulpit ministry, our cause for celebration diminishes or fades. As we celebrate events--that is, lived moments--we proclaim the Gospel of that event.

Our worship and celebration becomes a time of confession as well as proclamation. It is a time of renewed commitment to each other and to the Kingdom of God. The symbolic acts of giving ourselves anew to God is also an important part of celebration.

In his new book, God's Party, David Randolph describes what it is we celebrate in worship. He suggests three objectives of our celebration.

1. Worship celebrates the vitality by which we enjoy life.
2. Worship celebrates the values by which we govern life.
3. Worship celebrates the visions by which we transform life.²

Our worship life needs to include all three of these. It also needs to include the participation of the whole person, including our emotions. Much

²David J. Randolph, God's Party (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), pp. 18-19.

of worship become sterile because it is too cerebral and cuts people off from their bodies and their feelings.

One of the greatest works a church can do is liturgical work--bringing people into a worshipping, responding, and renewing relationship to God, self, the world and the environment. The truly liturgical is a communal experience of an overall style of being in the world. Liturgy is the fresh working of God's people that enables them to sense the immediacy of God's activity and unexpected creations in us and through us.

What is our Biblical Affirmation?

This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as an ordinance forever. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; on the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses, for if any one eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly; no work shall be done on those days; but what every one must eat, that only may be prepared by you. And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as an ordinance forever. Exodus 12:14-17.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Psalms 100:1-2.

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son." Matthew 22:1-2.

But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to make merry. Luke 15:22-24.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:26.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:4, 8.

What are the Implications for our Ministry?

1. It means we must guard against ever allowing our worship services to become dull, boring, or empty ritualism. Frozen liturgies and repetitive rigidities tend to cause stuffiness and passivity in our worship life. Every corporate worship will be planned and hopefully experienced as a fresh service of celebration.

2. It means, as Snyder puts it, "to intensify realness, immediacy, presence, warmth, momentum, expectancy, surprise, astonishment and awe in church events."³ To do this we need to maintain a creative tension between the traditional and contemporary forms of worship and celebration between the personal and the communal, between the imminence and transcendence of God.

3. It means that we see ourselves as partners with God carrying on the act of creation, bringing the new into existence, bringing peace where there has been hostility, transforming the ugly into beauty, and bringing life where

³Snyder, p. 31

there has been death. It means the church can celebrate the advent of change and development. In being involved in these enterprises and events and keeping them before us we give rise to celebration in all of life. Celebration will enable us to find meaning in the incidental little happenings each day. Through celebration we become aware of numerous serendipities for which we can be thankful.

4. It means finding opportunity for celebration for everyone in the communal context. It means allowing the community to enter into the various events and happenings that take place in people's lives, to be present to one another, and to find ways to give expression to our celebrative spirit. These expressions may take the form of art, music, dance, prayer, laughter, or silence. It means that we will seek to relate our worship events to the larger community of saints and learn to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

5. It means that we will see the call to be a Christian as an invitation to a party not a prison experience or death warrant. Jesus invites us to a marriage feast. It means learning to become less judgmental toward people and learning to build on strengths not weaknesses. A strong emphasis on the positive aspects of life helps us to develop a celebrative life-style. Celebration builds hope. The Christian community seeks to give a sense of hope to the lonely, rejected, hurting, and forgotten people in society. The Christian learns to celebrate in the midst of pain.

6. It means that our celebration will always be God-centered. We are

called to glorify God and have fellowship with him. The Christian community finds it important to adore and worship God for who he is, not just what he does. It means a strong belief in and practice of prayer, praise and thanksgiving. It means being open to the expression of intuitive feelings, artistic forms, and lived experiences as part of our style of celebration.

7. It means we will always strive to make the proclamation of Gospel central to our corporate worship. We will always maintain the cruciality of the cross and confidence in the folly of preaching. While preaching can never be replaced, there is room in our program for the proclamation of the Gospel through a variety of media. The church will sense its responsibility and participation in the role of preaching through responsive listening and increased dialogue between the pew and the pulpit.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH IS A CENTER OF SELF-GIVING SERVICE

What do we Mean?

The nation Israel was looked upon by the prophet as a servant of God in the world. The Messiah to come was often pictured as a suffering servant. The incarnation as described in Philippians sees Jesus taking on the form of a servant who became obedient. The language Paul uses to describe the early Christians included the term servant or slave, which means martyr. Our ministry, therefore, is a ministry of service. The Christian community is a gathering of people who become available to each other and to the world. In the incarnation the word became flesh. God became one of us. He pitched his tent among us. To live incarnationally means to go and live with and among those who need us in order to love and serve them. Christian service is more than giving bread or water. It is giving of oneself to others, to the community, and to the world. Christians always recognize that others have a claim on their lives.

The idea of Christian service has its roots in the biblical concept of love (agape). This love has its most penetrating focus for us in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To be a Christian is to participate in the life of Christ; and this means participation in his death and resurrection. It is at the cross that we learn what holy love is all about. Here we learn that love is

not human sentiment, mere feelings, or God-talk. It is disciplined self-giving without any promise of being accepted or understood by those we love. It means a willingness to live with the pain that we may have in our relationships with one another. To truly love one's neighbor may sound appealing but it is often difficult and painful.

Because we are created in the image of God our deepest need is to be loved. This need has both human and divine roots. An important principle to keep in mind is that we do not find love by looking for it; we find it by giving it. This is what the cross of Christ teaches us. It is, therefore, as important for us to love as it is for us to be loved. Our need to love is as great as our need to be loved. We must not assume that because we have been loved we shall automatically become a person who loves. The experience of being loved prepares us to love, but we can misuse the gifts of love. We may not want to assume responsibility for others and become self-centered misers of love.

There are some disciplines of love that are important in order for us to serve others redemptively and consistently. First, there is the discipline of giving oneself in word and action. It is not enough to say, "I love you." Love needs to be incarnated in flesh and blood by people. We need to stand alongside of those we love and serve. When we do this we may not always be appreciated but the fear of rejection must not keep us from acting in love. Second, there is the discipline of listening to those we want to serve in love. Love calls for a respect of the other person and a desire to get to know that

person or people, not from our point of view but from their point of view. We need to walk in the other person's shoes for awhile before we speak. The third discipline is the demand in love and our obligation to meet that demand. There is an element of law in love. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you." When we are in union with Christ and experiencing normal health as persons we often are not conscious of the law in love but it is implicitly present.

As the Christian community seeks to live out its life of service it will find its power and inspiration in God's love. Our love is renewed in his love. When Jesus said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you," that power included the power to love. When our attempts to love others are rejected or ignored we will not give up or despair. As Paul says in Corinthians, "Love never gives up." Perseverance, patience and continuity are some aspects of Christian service we learn from the carpenter's son from Nazareth. The towel and basin of water become the symbol of service which is central to our life style.

What is our Biblical Affirmation?

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. Isaiah 42:1.

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored. It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16.

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded....If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. John 13:3, 5, 14, 15.

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8.

Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:43-45.

Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. Matthew 25:40.

Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1 John 3:18, 16.

What are the Implications for our Ministry?

1. It means that the incarnation of Jesus will serve as a model for our ministry as well as an event of our redemption. The Christian community will seek to identify with those who are in need. We need to learn that it is difficult to know how to love someone until we walk in his/her shoes for awhile. We will teach and live an incarnational theology. This means we cannot separate proclamation and presence in Christian witness. They are two wings of a bird, one without the other is so impotent as to be virtually useless.

2. It means that we will become available to our community and our city. Our programs will be set up in such a way that they will be a service to those who seek help, without requiring that they buy into our beliefs or join our church. Our facilities will be available to those groups and organizations that are also seeking to bring health and healing to our society. We will seek to relate more meaningfully to other institutions of human development, both religious and secular.

3. It means we will endeavor to become continually familiar with our society in order to know what its needs are. We will find out where the unchurched people in our neighborhood are hurting. We will go out to be present where these hurts are lived--listening, feeling, tasting, and seeing first hand what is happening. As we encounter our neighbors and the leadership of the community in which we live, we will ask how we can be of service. Ours is a listening ministry. This may mean learning a new vocabulary. We may be more effective if we go out without a Bible under our arms.

4. The church serves as a moral agency, a cultural boundary structure in society. The great crisis of our civilization is a moral problem. The issues that face us have their scientific and intellectual dimensions, but they are basically ethical issues. P.T. Forsyth reminds us that, "It is the business of the church to be a moral guide of society; to translate her holy Gospel into large social ethics closely relevant to the time."¹

¹Peter T. Forsyth, The Church, The Gospel and Society (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 59.

The church is vital to the state and we must take a more informed, constructive attitude to public affairs. In order to serve as a moral guide or influence in society, Christianity cannot be bound up with any particular political or social system; it must reserve the right to criticize all or any in the light of the Gospel.

5. It means that we will see our ministry of service as preventative on many levels as well as treatment and rehabilitation. This means seeking to strengthen positive sociocultural influences, modify or eradicate negative influences, or change the influences from negative to positive. For example our interest in ecology is part of our service ministry to present and future generations. Another example is the issue of alcoholism and drug abuse. As we seek to shape attitudes and behavior we are serving the society in preventative medicine.

6. It means we will stress the calling of each Christian and the corporate body to lay down our life for our neighbor. This involves a kind of dying in order to serve. It involves giving ourselves, not just our services and material things. It involves sacrifice as a style of life. To love and serve does not mean letting people walk on us or use us in a de-humanizing way but it means that kind of giving of oneself that enables others to become whole persons.

7. It means sharing ourselves with our time, talents, and treasures. Learning to love as God loves us means a freedom to act in a self-giving way toward others. In order to help people to do this the church must not be hesi-

tant or embarrassed to talk about money as a sanctified tool for ministry. It means the freedom to encourage tithing and other biblical methods of giving.

8. It means that the church may serve as a crisis center, offering human assistance to people who live in the midst of life crises. It means an exerted effort to be available to all people--the rich and the poor, the minorities, the disenfranchised, the political, social and educational leaders, the sick and the healthy, the refugee and migrant workers, the young and the elderly, the living and the dying, the religious and the non-religious. The family that has had their house burn down or just moved in from another country can find assistance and human concern. We can learn from groups like Alcoholics Anonymous how important it is to be available to those who need us at any time of the day or night. We need to communicate better to the non-churched what our ministry is all about.

9. It means raising a global consciousness in our servant role. We belong to a world of people who need help. We must not neglect the needs of those next door; but the third and fourth worlds are as much our neighbor as is the family across the street. This means keeping in touch with other parts of the world and learning to respect other cultures.

10. It means we will be on guard against any tendency to privatize religion. Biblical religion is not a religion of two--Jesus and me. It is a religion of three--God, me, and my neighbor. When we invite Christ into our lives, he always brings my brother and sister with him. There is an attempt on the part of some to spiritualize passages like Matthew 25 where Jesus said,

"I was hungry and you fed me." This we dare not condone. We dare not confine our religion to the inner world or to the next world. To understand our role as servant is to realize that Christ often comes to us in the needs of our brothers.

CHAPTER X

GOALS FOR CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

The following goals are presented to the leadership of Christ Lutheran Church with the intention that they be used as a catalyst for discussion and planning for the future. They come from various sources. Some are my own ideas and dreams. Some are ideas or parts of ideas shared by different members and friends of our Christian community or by Pastor Joe. Others have come from my exposure to different churches I have visited and books that I have read. It is important that the final goals set for our church come from the people who will be responsible to carry them out. As we all begin to feel some ownership of these goals we will be better prepared to put them into action and see them through. During these next few months these goals will be given serious and critical attention by the church council and the standing committees with the intention that by January of 1976 we will have a more finalized format from which to work.

Immediate Goals

1. In the fall of 1976 we will seek to invite and involve at least 250 of our members in fifteen-twenty different small groups. These groups will vary in emphasis. Some will be more task orientated, some study groups, but most of them will be fellowship groups where the time spent together will be divided between study, sharing, and prayer. The leaders will be trained

by one of the pastors. The contract for each group will run for eight weeks, renewable at the end of the series. This year we will strongly encourage that the contracts be renewed after Christmas. The creative role of interpersonal groups in our church will give us new understandings in personality, development, social change, vocation, and the meaning of being human.

2. When any new people seek to join our church in the coming year, they will be invited and strongly encouraged to begin this involvement by becoming part of a small group for six-seven weeks. Various members of the congregation will also be asked to be in these groups. We will start four of these groups in 1976. Each prospect will be visited by one of the pastors in the home to talk over the purpose of these groups.

3. We will build into our program a greater measure of self-evaluation and accountability. The eight standing committees of Christ Lutheran Church will be asked to set out their goals for 1976 in such a way that they can be evaluated during the year and at the end of the year. They will use the categories in this outline as their guide. Each committee will be asked to give an accountability of the year's work to the church council.

4. The Burning Bush model will be used as a guiding theme for our total ministry for these next two years. A task force of six people will be established to work along with Project Burning Bush from the School of Theology in Claremont. Their goal will be to seek new ways to enable the congregation to combine spirituality and global consciousness in its ministry. At the end of 1976 they will present their findings to the church council with specific

proposals for the future. In September of 1975 a faculty member of the School of Theology will be asked to preach one Sunday in order to introduce this project to our congregation.

5. A class on World Hunger will be taught in the fall of 1975 as part of our adult education program on Sunday mornings. The emphasis will seek to look at the problem, the causes, and possible Christian response. This class will be followed up by a small task force on world hunger that will seek to continue the study and make proposals to the church council and the congregation. Alternate life-styles will be discussed. Priorities and values will be examined. In the winter quarter of 1976 a Sunday morning class will be held in the church kitchen on "A Gourmet Diet for a Hungry World." We will also work toward the goal of dividing our world hunger money into three areas--one-third to emergency relief, one-third to development and leadership, and one-third to education and consciousness raising in the first world.

6. In the fall of 1975 we will join with the Lutheran Student House in sponsoring a one-day seminar on "The Shalom Woman." Various speakers will be invited to speak on the issues of women seeking liberation and wholeness as God has intended. This will be followed by a Sunday morning adult class in 1976 on "The Shalom Woman." In the fall of 1976 we will do the same thing for men as they seek to learn the meaning of liberation and consciousness raising. During this coming year we will seek to remove sexist language from our worship and news releases.

7. We will strengthen our lay counseling program with both training and

counseling services. One lady who has had training for lay counseling will begin to do both private and group counseling at our church this fall. She will then be asked to start a group for those who are interested in using their gifts in the area of counseling. In the winter quarter of 1976 a professional psychologist will be secured to teach a course on "How to Counsel." A volunteer or part-time paid worker will begin to organize and put into operation our lay counseling volunteers and requests. Ground work will be laid for the fulltime staff position of Marriage and Family Counselor.

8. The stewardship time and talent form that is used each year during the fall stewardship program will be revised to give emphasis to the four-fold function of the church as described in this paper. This will introduce our new emphasis to the congregation and help them to see how it continues most of the things we are already doing. Greater stress will be given to our mutual ministry. Those who fail to participate in any way will be visited by someone from the church to find out the reasons. They will be encouraged to enter some type of contract for the coming year that will aid their growth and fulfillment. For our goal this fall we will seek to receive time and talent responses from 75% of our confirmed membership. The Stewardship Committee will be in charge of this project.

9. We will examine our education budget for 1975 to see how much we invest in adult learning and training. For 1976 we will seek to double our investment in adult training and present to the council a specific plan for this. The Parish Education Board will be asked to do this.

10. The Social Action Committee will be asked to examine the possibility of appointing part of its committee to become informed about the needs of our community by contacts with the city council, the planning commission, the school district office, the welfare offices, the police department, and other such service agencies. The tree of love which graphically portrays our congregation's involvement in social action will be brought up to date by Thanksgiving 1976. This is a large bulletin board showing the names of various members who are active in a ministry of service to people in our community.

11. We will begin a new teacher-trainee class of the Bethel Bible Series in which twelve-fifteen people are recruited to be in training for two years. This is a college-level Bible survey course that requires homework and memorization. They will meet weekly for two and one-half hours and after two years be ready to teach the same survey course of the Bible to other members. This will start in January of 1976 and be taught by one of the pastors.

12. We will suggest to the Worship and Music Committee that we seek new ways to bring the spirit of celebration into all church events with special emphasis on the Sunday worship. Litanies of celebration could be used once a month. Consciousness raising will be emphasized in our various forms of worship. Each Sunday at worship during the announcements we could ask for people who are celebrating some special event to share it with the rest of the community. We could either sing to them or give them a chance to choose a song they'd like to have us sing. We will refer to our Sunday worship time as a Service of Celebration.

13. We will establish an ad hoc committee to help us plan how Christ Lutheran Church could creatively celebrate the bicentennial of our country. One adult course during 1976 will be devoted to a study of our 200 years of history and the role of the church in that history. The American dream will be looked at from the perspective of the Gospel. We will ask ourselves how we can celebrate a history that has both good and bad consequences. In this study, we will discuss the place of patriotism in the Christian life and the Christian's attitude toward social revolution, government, and politics.

14. In order for there to be greater involvement in the political system and the social issues that have moral implications we will publish in our newsletter each month a brief synopsis of pertinent legislative issues, both state and national. We will send four people to the Church and Legislative Conference in Sacramento in the spring of 1976. We will make available open forums where people can get informed about the issues at stake in the presidential election in 1976. We will make available an up-to-date list of names and addresses of political leaders in our local, state, and national government. We will encourage everyone to become informed, involved, and responsible to the state as well as the church.

15. A marriage enrichment program will be conducted in 1975-1976. It will provide a variety of opportunities for people to grow in their marriage relationships. There will be three marriage enrichment retreats. In the fall there will be one for young couples. In the spring there will be one for middle-age people whose children are leaving home as well as one for engaged

couples. In January 1976 there will be a Sunday evening series of six-seven sessions on marriage enrichment with a guest leader. There will also be a Sunday morning adult class on Preparation for Marriage during the winter quarter and a course on Marriage and Family in the spring quarter. We will give wide publicity to these opportunities for growth.

16. A Refugee Committee will be formed to deal with the immediate Southeast Asia refugee emergency. It will be formed of volunteers with council representation. A study will be made of opportunities we have of serving and helping these refugees. Hopefully, a family or two will be sponsored by our congregation with as many as possible supporting the program. We will seek to provide cultural opportunities that are indigenous to their life-style. An attempt will be made to enable us to learn from them. This effort will perhaps spark our interest in global consciousness and open up other doors for us to serve and help third-world people.

17. A grief-recovery group will be initiated this coming year. This is a mutual-help group in which people who have suffered a significant loss of any kind can come together for sharing and experience the healing that can occur in such a caring group. That loss may be from a divorce as well as from a death. They will meet for six-eight sessions and it will be led by a person trained in leading small groups.

18. The equal opportunity amendment carries implications for our ministry. This next year we will seek to enlist greater involvement of women in ministries that traditionally have been done by men. We will place women ushers

on every team. We will strive to balance the church council and standing committees with as many women as men. We will encourage the Board of Education to use as many men teachers as women. Both men and women will be used to assist the pastors in distribution at Holy Communion. The women of the church will not be relegated to doing only service tasks but will be encouraged to be part of the policy and decision-making process as well.

19. We will invite four schools to use our church as one possible location for some of their extension classes in theology. They are California Lutheran College and their Center for Theological Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, California Lutheran Bible School, and the School of Theology at Claremont. Our church facilities are ideal because of our proximity to the freeway. These classes would be open to the entire community. We will also explore a working relationship with California State University in their adult extension program.

20. A new group called The Drama Club will be formed and encouraged to use the media of drama to raise issues that face our society and communicate the Gospel. By the end of one year they will have put together and presented three productions and will become available to other churches and groups. Hopefully this will open the door for greater imagination among members of our Christian community and encourage the utilization of all creative arts to glorify God.

21. We will continue to revise and reshape our confirmation program during this next year. It will include phasing into the individual-learning

approach which will be balanced with a major emphasis on relationships and fellowship. A well-equipped learning center will be started with various audio-visual equipment available. This will include the purchase of a cassette tape reproducing machine that will serve multiple purposes.

Long-range Goals

These goals will cover a five-year period between 1976-1980. Because of the uncertainties of the future, they will not be as specific as the one-year goals.

1. Christ Lutheran Church will work towards becoming a community care-center that ministers to the whole person with the whole Gospel. We will seek to bring about a creative ministry that blends the personal and the social, humanism and divinity, continuity and change, the heart and the mind. This means our aim will be both personal conversion and social transformation. We will endeavor to maintain our evangelical theology and combine that with courageous and radical social action. It may be that this congregation could become a living example of how these two aspects of ministry can be lived out in such a way that the Gospel becomes a whole Gospel and the church is seen as a viable institution to bring about reconciliation in our society in the 1970's.

2. We will work to win the one-third to one-half of our members who are caught in the inconsequential and the marginal issues of life--those who are not actively involved in the Christian community or its mission to the

world. In the spirit of love and with tenderness we will challenge all members to a deeper commitment to Jesus Christ and to one another. We will continue our emphasis and preaching for personal commitment and conversion realizing that we all need to be continually converted and changed.

3. Our education program will develop programs that are more family orientated, or at least give that option. An experiment will be tried in family cluster meetings where different family units (four-five) will meet weekly to play together, eat a potluck, and discuss common problems, feelings, and ideas. Along this line our whole counseling ministry will move more in the direction of family counseling.

4. Our Bethel Bible teachers will have completed their two years of training by the end of 1977. They will engage as many as possible in this type of Bible survey. After five years we will seek to have half of our congregation who have had the Bethel Series as a foundation of their training for ministry.

5. In five years we will have established a counseling and caring center that will include a full-time licensed family and marriage counselor. It may also include a building of its own that might serve as a drop-in center and home for youth who have run away from home or an alcoholic rehabilitation center. This center will serve to train and use lay counselors. There will be a special board set up to govern this center where fees are charged on a sliding scale.

6. Christ Lutheran Church will engage in an all-out war on hunger

throughout the world. In five years our World Hunger Task Force will be trained, informed, and ready to be a resource to other congregations who are seeking to put a program together. They will have attended classes, lectures, and workshops so that they are right on top of the situation. A library of the latest and best material will be available including films and video tapes. A large number of our members, maybe fifty-one hundred people, will choose this area to give themselves in service and action. Some will have traveled abroad and can give a first-hand report to us. We will seek to raise the status of agriculture in Christian service. We will seek to work with other churches, groups, and institutions in this great need. A marked change in the life-style of many of us will occur as this concern is brought home to us.

7. The budget of our church will bear witness to our purpose with less monies being spent to maintain our facilities. Our church budget will give greater attention to training of our members for ministry. In five years we will be spending as much on education and training for adults as we do on children. Our benevolence budget will reach 30% of the total budget by 1980. We will also offer counseling on writing one's will and annuity planning.

8. Our church library will become a central focus of our training and learning ministry. The present 1000 books will be increased to 2000 books. Our tape library will be expanded to include at least 500 tapes with five cassette tape recorders that can be checked out. A miniature bookstore will be set up along with our library that will provide a few books and Bibles for

sale on Sundays. A new location for our library may be necessary by 1980. Reading good books will become a part of Christian growth for more of our people, including children. The Library Committee will be actively responsible for this ministry.

9. A concerted effort will be made to integrate our congregation with more minorities who live in our area. This will include an effort to see that minorities are free to buy and rent housing in our community. By 1980 there should be at least twenty non-white families active in our Christian community. We will establish greater dialogue with the Black and Indian communities in Long Beach. The fight against racism will continue as a priority for us all with leadership given by the Social Action Committee.

10. In the next five years we will work toward developing a tithing church. With a careful theological base that is grounded in grace, not law, and with a careful yet deliberate emphasis on discipline and sacrifice we will teach our Christian community the blessings of tithing. By 1980 we will have 50% of our people tithing to the glory of God. Many will be encouraged to go beyond the tithe in their sacrificial giving.

11. A more careful record will be kept during these next years of all the education, training, and skills of our members. Those who complete an educational course in our program will be given credit or acknowledgement. Each person will be given a copy of this record yearly. By this we will promote greater discipline in attendance and we will know who is equipped for

the various ministries. It should also help members to see the priority that needs to be given to training and education.

12. An internship program will be started at Christ Lutheran Church in the next five years. We will seek to cooperate with seminaries who are using the model of contextual education to train pastors. During the year 1980 we will be employing at least two interns who are also going to school in some seminary. During the summer of 1980 we will be employing at least five students for pay and at least ten youth who will be volunteer workers. A study will be made as to the possibility of using our church for internships or field service for social workers from Long Beach or Dominguez Hills State University. We will encourage all young people in our church to give one year of their life to volunteer work in the church on some phase of human development service.

13. Christ Lutheran Church will give high priority in these next years to having a strong preaching ministry. Through the cooperation of the members and the discipline and hard work of the pastors the preaching will become increasingly powerful and courageous. As a result numbers of people will be converted to Christ, healed of brokenness, and freed up to develop into whole persons. More emphasis will be given to series preaching. Dittoed copies and tape cassettes of sermons will be made available to the public by 1980.

14. We will expand and develop our small group ministry during these next five years so that by 1980, 75% of our members will be in a growth group or have found some support group for their spiritual growth. Small

groups will become a main means of evangelism and outreach. Members will be encouraged to begin groups in their neighborhood. A core group of group leaders will have adequate training and experience to continue this ministry.

15. We will continue a strong emphasis on adult education on Sunday mornings. This will be expanded to include more weekday opportunities for those who cannot participate on Sundays. We will seek to maintain a balance between biblical studies, self-help groups, current issues, and family enrichment. Education for adults will include field trips, camping and outdoor ministries, retreats, experience in volunteer work, and public educational opportunities from other institutions. By 1980 we will be offering at least ten courses for adults every Sunday morning with 400-500 adults involved.

16. We will seek to serve people in various careers in our community as they look for ways to relate Christian love in their daily work. To do this we will begin with a class for those in the nursing and patient-care profession. A special emphasis will be given on how to minister to the whole family during illness and grief. Following this we will seek to address and help medical doctors, social workers, educators, business executives, lawyers and court workers, real estate agents, government and political leaders, and others. As we listen to each other we will better be able to know how we can work together toward a better society.

17. Communal living in community houses will be one change of lifestyle that will be an option for a number of people in our congregation by 1980. With one such experiment going on now in Pastor Joe's home and the

example of the Lutheran Student House we have something from which to learn. In five years it is expected that several more people will find this option one that will enable them to experience Christian community and to share more of their resources with those in need. Hopefully others will find equally meaningful changes in life-styles appropriate to our calling and ministry.

18. Consciousness raising will become more and more a concept that will describe one important part of our ministry. This involved our effort to help people toward what Paulo Freire calls "critical awareness" which delves into problems, is open to new ideas and change, replaces magical explanations with real causes, and seeks dialogue. More and more we will be talking about the image of God in everyone and the ministry of raising this consciousness through spiritual conversion and growth. We will become more aware of political and liberation theology as it relates to our mission as a congregation. Included in this will be an increased effort to raise global consciousness and to see our part in the liberation of the world God created.

19. In the coming five years we will seek to enable Christians to use their minds as well as their hearts to love God and their neighbor. As Elton Trueblood reminds us, the Christian vocation is to pray, to serve, and to think. A special effort will be given to develop our intellectual capacities which have been given us by God. Our church will become known as a place where questions can be asked. Creativity will be encouraged. The ability to discern the spirits will be part of one's training in discipleship. Tools for biblical scholarship will become available for those who seek to go deeper into

the study of the Bible. Probing questions concerning the meaning of life and death will be faced with confidence in the promise, "Seek and you shall find."

20. We will give special attention to the sacramental aspects of living. By sacramental we mean the experience of God coming to us, the experience of grace, and the experience of spiritual reality in and through lived moments and happenings. God chooses to come to us through the bread and wine. He also comes to us in many other unexpected ways in our lives. These moments need to be celebrated. Then our celebrations will become a series of transformations; experiences will be translated into meanings.

21. The ministry of our Christian community will see as one of its goals during these five years to confront the false assumptions and negative thinking that paralyzes the church. We will constantly be exposing the assumptions and attitudes that are often used to defend our ignorance, our failures, and our weakness. For example, some people live with the assumption that it is impossible to produce enough food to feed the present world population. That is a myth. Another myth is the idea that if individuals are converted, the social problems will automatically be solved. We will attack these misconceptions with the strong conviction that, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

A constant need is brought to the surface as we seek to articulate the nature and ministry of the Christian church today--that is, a "both--and" need. We must learn to live with paradox. A paradox consists of two statements about reality that appear to contradict one another, neither of which is complete without the other. A careful balance means holding both sides of a paradox in creative tension. This balance is necessary lest we take a truth and make a heresy of it by forgetting other truths that also need our attention. We need both the experience of the burning bush and the trip into Egypt to confront Pharaoh. We must respect and appreciate the uniqueness of each individual and the fact that without community we never develop into persons. We need to claim both the freedom of the Gospel and the need for discipline in the Christian life. We are called both to suffer and to celebrate as followers of Christ. There is value both in tradition and history, and in the freshness of the new and different. The Christian needs to be both in the Word and out in the world. Both the Bible and the newspaper help us understand our task. Throughout the entire realm of our existence is the element of the paradox. The church in ministry must learn to accept the mystery of paradox without trying to compromise the truths of a paradox by seeking a middle ground. The truth of each side of the paradox must not be watered down in our search for balance. The church always lives and grows in the

midst of the tension of paradox. What is needed is a holistic vision of God's mission to the world and the church's role in it.

The Christian community lives in the confidence of hope. We are agents of the possible. By the grace of God we live with the conviction that no person, no problem, no society need stay the way it is. We are a community held together by allegiance to Jesus Christ. Our role is to enable people to believe and hope in the unrealized transcendent possibilities, to hold God's place open in the world, to hold the world open to God. As people in the world are called upon to make decisions that either hinder or enhance growth, we want to keep the faith open and alive for them.

This paper is written out of the conviction that the church is suffering from locked-up potential that somehow cannot find release. We are under-living our prospects and capacities both individually and corporately. Because we often believe that we can do no other, we are not attempting very much. We are afraid to risk for God. We are playing it safe. Part of our problem has been a failure to take time to examine our calling and set out a plan. This paper is dedicated to the hope and dream that together we can begin to release the power available to us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. No institution in our land or in the world has more potential and possibilities than the Christian church. The church is the one organization dedicated not to itself but to others. It holds as its first value an overall plan of life for the individual and society.

We live in process. There is no final plan or best model for all churches

or for our congregation. In order for us to stay alive and open to the Spirit of God we must be flexible, self-critical, and open to change and adjustment. The Christian community must exercise the gift of discernment and constantly distinguish between trends and fads in religion. Trends are those things that have lasting value and can aid in spiritual renewal. Fads are those things that are short lived and do not leave a positive impact on the church. Dr. Ernest Campbell from Riverside Church in New York City says there are two things that distinguish trends from fads. Trends reckon seriously with history and with the Transcendent.

We are living in the midst of social revolution. It is not our option to stop it but it is our privilege to participate in it and help to shape and direct it. The question remains whether we will retreat into a closed fellowship to enjoy the comfort of our creeds and rituals or whether we will venture out into the world to work in and for the whole creation that Jesus Christ came to save. This is the urgent challenge before the church today.

The principles and proposals in this paper which outline a model for ministry will not be of any value unless they are put into action. This will mean work--hard work by many people. It is not enough for us to plan our work. We must also work our plan. The success of this model will not be dependent upon one or two people. It will need the priesthood of all believers and the participation of many dedicated people who have caught a vision of what could happen at Christ Lutheran Church. "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night comes when no man can

work." John 9:4.

It is important that we remember that the church is people--people called into community by a common experience and faith. The tone of a church is set not by its building or its program, but its people. Christ Lutheran Church is a community of ordinary people with ordinary gifts who have been changed by the power of God so that they are doing extraordinary things for God. As we are embraced and captured by the whole Gospel for the whole person we will become ministers of reconciliation to the whole world.

The exhortation of Orlando Costas captures the spirit of the intention of this paper.

The world needs a holistic, not a compartmentalized, distorted, beyond-recognition, docetic, or ebionistic Gospel. The world needs to hear and see a united church witnessing and preaching, in word and deed, the liberating message of Jesus Christ, worshipping and serving him and discipling its people on all six continents.

Let us, therefore, mobilize all our resources, man-power, finances, talents, imagination, contacts, and opportunities to meet this open door which the Lord lays open before his church in this hour of history. Let us give ourselves to be a prophetic, priestly, and royal community, in season and out of season. Let us proclaim, teach, and witness to, without reduction or apologies, the whole Gospel of the kingdom to the whole man in the whole world. Let us strive for the integral growth of the church to the end that all the peoples of the earth might experience God's salvation in Jesus Christ in their struggles for hope and life everlasting, reconciliation and forgiveness, solidarity, justice and dignity.¹

God is active in the world. Let us find out what he is doing and join him. Soli deo gloria.

¹Orlando E. Costas, The Church and its Mission (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1974), p. 313.

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